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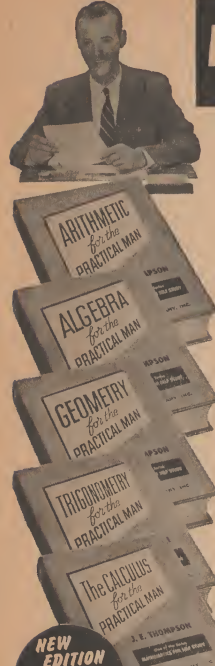

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Satellite SCIENCE FICTION presents

SISTER PLANET

A COMPLETE SHORT SCIENCE FICTION NOVEL

by POUL ANDERSON

Long afterward they found a dead man in shabby clothes adrift near San Francisco. The police decided he must have jumped from the Golden Gate Bridge one misty day. That was an oddly clean and lonesome place for some obscure wino to die ,but no one was very much interested. Beneath his shirt he carried a Bible with a bookmark indicating a certain passage which had been underlined. Idly curious, a member of the Homicide Squad studied the waterlogged pulp until he deduced the section: Ezekiel vii, 3-4.

A SQUALL HIT WHEN Shorty McClellan had almost set down. He yanked back the stick; jets snorted and the ferry stood on her tail and reached for heaven. An eyeblink later she was whipping about like a wind-tossed leaf. The viewports showed blackness. Above the wind there was a bongo beat of rain. Then lightning blazed and thunder followed and Nat Hawthorne closed off smitten sense channels.

Welcome back! he thought. Or did he say it aloud? The thunder rolled off, monster wheels if it was not laughter. He felt the vessel steady around him. When the dazzle had cleared from his eyes, he saw clouds and calm. A smoky blueness in the air told him that it was near sunset. What answered to sunset on Venus, he reminded himself. The daylight would linger on for hours, and the night never got truly dark.

"That was a near one," said Shorty McClellan.

"I thought these craft were designed to ride out storms," said Hawthorne.

"Sure. But not to double as submarines. We were pretty close to the surface when that one sneaked up on us. We could'a got dunked, and then—" McClellan shrugged.

"No real danger," Hawthorne answered. "We could get out the airlock, I'm sure, with masks, and stay afloat till they picked us up from the station. If Oscar and company didn't rescue us first. You realize there's no trouble from any native life-form. They find us every bit as poisonous as we find them."

"No danger, he says," groaned McClellan. "Well, you wouldn't have to account for five million bucks' worth of boat!"

© 1959, by Poul Anderson

The reshaping of Venus was so tremendous a feat of interplanetary engineering that it would have dwarfed every other achievement of Man. Surely all obstacles could be overcome, when the prize was so greatly to be desired. Why should one small scruple cloud the issue?

He began whistling tunelessly as he spiraled down for another approach. He was a small, heavy-set, quick-moving man with a freckled face and sandy hair. For years Hawthorne had only known him casually, as one of the pilots who took cargo between orbiting spaceships and Venus Station: a cocky sort, given to bawdy limericks and improbable narratives about himself and what he called the female race. But on the voyage from Earth, he had ended with shyly passing around stereos of his children and describing plans for opening a little resort on Great Bear Lake when he reached retirement age.

I thank the nonexistent Lord that I am a biologist, thought Hawthorne. *The farcical choice of quitting or accepting a desk job at thirty-five has not yet reached my line of work. I hope I'll*

still be tracing ecological chains and watching auroras over the Phosphor Sea at eighty.

As the boat tilted forward, he saw Venus below him. One would never have expected a landless, planet-wide ocean to be so alive. But there were climatic zones, each with its own million restless hues—the color of light, the quality of living organisms, nowhere the same, so that a sea on Venus was not an arbitrary section of water but an iridescent belt around the world. And then there was the angle of the sun, night-lighting, breezes and gales and typhoons, seasons, solar tides which had no barrier to their 20,000 mile march, and the great biological rhythms which men did not yet understand. No, you could sit for a hundred years in one place, watching, and never see the same thing twice. And all that you saw would be beautiful.

The Phosphor Sea girdled the planet between 55 and 63 degrees north latitude. Now from above, at evening, it had grown indigo, streaked with white; but on the world's very edge it shaded to black in the north and an infinitely clear green in the south. Here and there beneath the surface twined scarlet veins. A floating island, a jungle twisted over giant bladderweeds, upbore flame yellows and a private mistiness. Eastward walked the squall, blue-black and lightning, the water roaring in its track. The lower western clouds were tinged rose and copper. The permanent sky-layer above ranged from pearl gray in the east to a still blinding white in the west, where the invisible sun burned. A double rainbow arched the horizon.

Hawthorne sighed. It was good to be back.

Air whistled under the ferry's glider wings. Then it touched pontoons to water, bounced, came down again, and taxied for the station. A bow wave broke among those caissons and spouted toward the upper deck and the buildings which, gyro-stabilized, ignored such disturbances. As usual, the whole station crew had turned out to greet the vessel. Spaceship arrivals were months apart.

"End of the line." McClellan came to a halt, unbuckled himself, stood up and struggled into his air harness. "You know," he remarked, "I've never felt easy in one of these gizmos."

"Why not?" Hawthorne, hanging the tank on his own shoulders, looked in surprise at the pilot.

McClellan adjusted his mask. It covered nose and mouth with a tight airseal of celluplastic gasketing. Both men had already slipped ultraviolet-filtering contact lenses over their eyeballs. "I keep remembering that there isn't an oxygen molecule that's not man-made for twenty-five million miles," he confessed. The airhose muffled his voice, giving it for Hawthorne a homelike accent. "I'd feel safer with a spacesuit."

"De gustibus non disputandum est," said Hawthorne, "which has been translated as, 'There is no disputing that Gus is in the east.' Me, I was never yet in a space suit that didn't squeak and smell of somebody else's garlic."

Through the port he saw a long blue back swirl in the water and thresh impatient foam. A grin tugged at his lips. "Why, I'll bet Oscar knows I'm here," he said.

"Yeah. Soul mates," grunted McClellan.

They went out the airlock. Ears popped, adjusting to a slight pressure difference. The masks strained out some water vapor for reasons of comfort, and virtually all the carbon dioxide, for there was enough to kill a man in three gulps. Nitrogen, argon, and trace gases passed on, to be blent with oxygen from the harness tank and breathed. Units existed which electrolyzed the Earth-vital element directly from water, but so far they were cumbersome.

A man on Venus did best to keep such an engine handy in his boat or on the dock, for recharging the bottle on his back every few hours. Newcomers from Earth always found that an infernal nuisance, but after a while at Venus Station you fell into a calmer pattern.

A saner one? Hawthorne had often wondered. His latest visit to Earth had about convinced him.

The heat struck like a fist. He had already donned the local costume: loose, flowing garments of synthetic, designed to ward ultraviolet radiation off his skin and not absorb water. Now he paused for a moment, reminded himself that Man was a mammal able to get along quite well at even higher temperatures, and relaxed. The sea lapped his bare feet where he stood on a pontoon. It felt cool. Suddenly he stopped minding the heat; he forgot it entirely.

Oscar frisked up. Yes, of course it was Oscar. The other cetoids, a dozen or so, were more interested in the ferry, nosing it, rubbing their sleek flanks against the metal, holding their calves up in their foreflippers for a good look.

Oscar paid attention only to Hawthorne. He lifted his blunt bulky head, nuzzled the biologist's toes, and slapped flukes on water twenty feet away.

Hawthorne squatted. "Hi, Oscar," he said. "Didn't think I'd make it back, did you?" He chucked the beast under the chin. Be damned if the cetoids didn't have true chins. Oscar rolled belly-up and snorted.

"Thought I'd pick up some dame Earthside and forget all about you, huh?" murmured Hawthorne. "Why, bless your ugly puss, I wouldn't dream of it! Certainly not. I wouldn't waste Earthside time dreaming of abandoning you for a woman. I'd do it! C'mere, creature."

He scratched the rubbery skin just behind the blowhole. Oscar bumped against the pontoon and wriggled.

"Cut that out, will you?" asked McClellan. "I don't want a bath just yet." He threw a hawser. Wim Dykstra caught it, snubbed it around a bollard, and began to haul. The ferry moved slowly to the dock.

"Okay, Oscar, okay, okay," said Hawthorne. "I'm home. Let's not get sickening about it." He was a tall, rather bony man, with dark-blond hair and a prematurely creased face. "Yes, I've got a present for you too, same as the rest of the station, but let me get unpacked first. I got you a celluloid duck. Leggo there!"

The cetoid sounded. Hawthorne was about to step off onto the dock ladder when Oscar came back. With great care, the swimmer nudged the man's ankles and then, awkwardly, because this was not the regular trading pier, pushed something out of his mouth to lay at Hawthorne's feet. After which Oscar sounded again and Hawthorne muttered total, pro-

fane astonishment and felt his eyes sting a little.

He had just been presented with one of the finest firegems on record.

II

AFTER DARK, the aurora became visible. The sun was so close, and the Venusian magnetic field so weak, that even in the equator the sky became criss-crossed at times with great banners of light. Here in the Phosphor Sea, the night was royal blue, with rosy curtains and silent white shuddering streamers. And the water itself shone, bioluminescence, each wave laced by cold fires. Where droplets struck the station deck, they glowed for minutes before evaporating, as if gold coals had been strewn at random over its gleaming circumference.

Hawthorne looked out the transparent wall of the wardroom. "It's good to be back," he said.

"Get that," said Shorty McClellan. "From wine and women competing in droves for the company of a glamorous interplanetary explorer, it is good to be back. This man is crazy."

The geophysicist, Wim Dykstra, nodded with seriousness. He was the tall swarthy breed of Dutchman, whose ancestral memories are of Castilian uplands. Perhaps that is why so many of them feel forever homeless.

"I think I understand, Nat," he said. "I read between the lines of my mail. Is it that bad on Earth?"

"In some ways." Hawthorne leaned against the wall, staring into Venus' night.

The cetoids were playing about the station. Joyous torpedo shapes would hurtle from the water, streaming liquid radiance, arch over and come down in a fountain that burned. And then they threshed the sea and were off around a mile-wide circle, rolling and tumbling. The cannon-crack of bodies and flukes could be heard this far up.

"I was afraid of that. I do not know if I want to take my next furlough when it comes," said Dykstra.

McClellan looked bewildered. "What're you fellows talking about?" he asked. "What's wrong?"

Hawthorne sighed. "I don't know where to begin," he said. "The trouble is, Shorty, you see Earth continually. Get back from a voyage and you're there for weeks or months before taking off again. But we . . . we're gone three, four, five years at a stretch. We notice the changes."

"Oh, sure." McClellan shifted his weight uneasily in his chair. "Sure, I suppose you aren't used to—well, the gangs, or the corvées, or the fact that they've begun to ration dwelling space in America since the last time you were there. But still, you guys are well paid, and your job has prestige. You rate special privileges. What are *you* complaining about?"

"Call it the atmosphere," said Hawthorne. He sketched a smile. "If God existed, which thank God He doesn't, I'd say He has forgotten Earth."

Dykstra flushed. "God does not forget," he said. "Men do."

"Sorry, Wim," said Hawthorne. "But I've seen—not just Earth. Earth is too big to be anything but statistics. I visited my own country, the place where I grew up. And the lake whre I went fishing as a

kid is an alga farm and my mother has to share one miserable room with a yattering old biddy she can't stand the sight of.

"What's worse, they've cut down Bobolink Grove to put up still another slum mislabeled a housing project, and the gangs are operating in open daylight now. Armed escort has become a major industry. I walk into a bar and not a face is happy. They're just staring stupefied at a telescreen, and—" He pulled up short. "Never mind. I probably exaggerate."

"I'll say you do," said McClellan. "Why, I can show you places where no man has been since the Indians left—if it's nature you want. You've never been to San Francisco, have you? Well, come with me to a pub I know in North Beach, and I'll show you the time of your life."

"Sure," said Hawthorne. "What I wonder is, how much longer will those fragments survive?"

"Some of them, indefinitely," said McClellan. "They're corporate property. These days C. P. means private estates."

Wim Dykstra nodded. "The rich get richer," he said, "and the poor get poorer, and the middle class vanishes. Eventually there is the fossilized Empire. I have read history."

He regarded Hawthorne out of dark, thoughtful eyes. "Medieval feudalism and monasticism evolved *within* the Roman domain: they were there when it fell apart. I wonder if a parallel development may not already be taking place. The feudalism of the large organizations on Earth; the monasticism of planetary stations like this."

"Complete with celibacy," grimaced McClellan. "Me, I'll take the feudalism!"

Hawthorne sighed again. There was always a price. Sex-suppressive pills, and the memory of fervent lips and clinging arms on Earth, were often poor comfort.

"We're not a very good analogy, Wim," he argued. "In the first place, we live entirely off the jewel trade. Because it's profitable, we're allowed to carry on the scientific work which interests us personally: that's part of our wage, in effect. But if the cetoids stopped bringing gems, we'd be hauled

home so fast we'd meet ourselves coming back. You know nobody will pay the fabulous cost of interplanetary freight for pure knowledge—only for luxuries."

Dykstra shrugged. "What of it? The economics is irrelevant to our monasticism. Have you never drunk Benedictine?"

"Uh . . . yeah, I get it. But also, we're only celibate by necessity. Our big hope is that eventually we can have our own women."

Dykstra smiled. "I am not pressing the analogy too close," he said. "My point is that we feel ourselves serving a larger purpose, a cultural purpose. Science, in our case, rather than religion, but still a purpose worth all the isolation and other sacrifice. If, in our hearts, we really consider the isolation a sacrifice."

Hawthorne winced. Sometimes Dykstra was too analytical. Indeed, thought Hawthorne, the station personnel were monks. Wim himself—but he was a passionate man, fortunate enough to be single-minded. Hawthorne, less lucky, had spent fifteen years shaking off a Puritan upbringing, and finally realized that he never would. He had killed his father's unmerciful God, but the ghost would always haunt him.

He could now try to make up for long self-denial by an Earthside leave which was one continuous orgy, but the sense of sin plagued him notwithstanding, disguised as bitterness. I have been iniquitous upon Terra. Ergo, Terra is a sink of evil.

Dykstra continued, with a sudden unwonted tension in his voice: "The analogy with medieval monasteries holds good in another respect too. They thought they were retreating from the world. Instead, they became the nucleus of its next stage. And we too, unwittingly until now, may have changed history."

"Uh-uh," denied McClellan. "You can't have a history without a next generation, can you? And there's not a woman on all Venus."

Hawthorne said, quickly, to get away from his own thoughts: "There was talk in the Company offices about that. They'd like to arrange it, if they can, to give all of us more incentive to stay. They think maybe it'll be possible. If trade continues to expand, the Station will have to be enlarged, and the new people could just as well be female technicians and scientists."

"That could lead to trouble," said McClellan.

"Not if there were enough to go around," said Hawthorne. "And nobody signs on here who hasn't long ago given up any hope of enriching their lives with romantic love, or fatherhood."

"They could have that," murmured Dykstra. "Fatherhood, I mean."

"Kids?" Hawthorne was startled. "On Venus?"

A look of exultant triumph flickered across Dykstra's face. Hawthorne, reverting to the sensitivity of intimate years, knew that Dykstra had a secret, which he wanted to shout to the universe, but could not yet. Dykstra had discovered something wonderful.

To give him a lead, Hawthorne said: "I've been so busy swapping gossip, I've had no time for shop talk. What have you learned about this planet since I left?"

"Some promising things," said Dykstra, evasively. His tone was still not altogether steady.

"Found how the firegems are created?"

"Heavens, no. That would scuttle us, wouldn't it—if they could be synthesized? No . . . you can talk to Chris, if you wish. But I know he has only established that they are a biological product, like pearls. Apparently several strains of bacteroids are involved, which exist only under Venusian deep-sea conditions."

"Learn more about the life cycle?" asked McClellan. He had a spaceman's somewhat morbid fascination with any organisms that got along without oxygen.

"Yes, Chris and Mamoru and their co-workers have developed quite a lot of the detailed chemistry," said Dykstra. "It is over my head, Nat. But you will want to study it, and they have been anxious for your help as an ecologist. You know this business of the plants, if one may call them that, using solar energy to build up unsaturated compounds, which the creatures we call animals then oxidize? Oxidation need not involve oxygen, Shorty."

"I know that much chemistry," said McClellan, looking hurt.

"Well, in a general way the reactions involved did not seem energetic enough to power animals the size of Oscar. No enzymes could be identified which—" He paused, frowning a little. "Anyhow, Mamoru got to thinking about fermentation, the closest Terrestrial analogy. And it seems that microorganisms really *are* involved. The Venusian enzymes are indistinguishable from . . . shall we call them viruses, for lack of a better name? Certain forms even seem to function like genes. How is that for a symbiosis, eh? Puts the classical examples in the shade."

Hawthorne whistled.

"I daresay it's a very fascinating new concept," said McClellan. "As for myself, I wish you'd hurry up and give us our cargo, so we can go home. Not that I don't like you guys, but you're not exactly my type."

"It will take a few days," said Dykstra. "It always does."

"Well, just so they're Earth days, not Venusian."

"I may have a most important letter for you to deliver," said Dykstra. "I have not yet gathered the crucial data, but you must wait for that if nothing else."

Suddenly he shivered with excitement.

III

THE LONG NIGHTS were devoted to study of material gathered in the daytime. When Hawthorne emerged into sunrise, where mists smoked along purple waters under a sky like nacre, the whole station seemed to explode outward around him. Wim Dykstra had already scooted off with his new assistant, little Jimmy Cheng-tung of the hopeful grin and their two-man sub was over the horizon, picking up data-recording units off the sea bottom. Now boats left the wharf in every direction: Diehl and Matsumoto to gather pseudo-plankton, Vassiliev after some of the beautiful coralite on Erebus Bank, Lafarge continuing his mapping of the currents,

Glass heading straight up to investigate the clouds a bit more . . .

The space ferry had been given its first loading during the night. Shorty McClellan walked across a bare deck with Hawthorne and Captain Jevons. "Expect me back again about local sundown," he said. "No use coming before then, with everyone out fossicking."

"I imagine not." Jevons, white-haired and dignified, looked wistfully at Lafarge's retreating craft.

Five cetoids frisked in its wake, leaping and spouting and gaily swimming rings around it. Nobody had invited them, but by now few men would have ventured out of station view without such an escort.

More than once, when accidents happened—and they happened often on an entire planet as big and varied as Earth—the cetoids had saved lives. A man could ride on the back of one, if worst came to worst, but more often several would labor to keep a damaged vessel afloat, as if they knew the cost of hauling even a rowboat across space.

"I'd like to go fossicking myself," said Jevons. He chuckled. "But someone has to mind the store."

"Uh, how did the Veenics go for that last lot of stuff?" asked McClellan. "The plastic jewelry?"

"They didn't," said Jevons. "They simply ignored it. Proving, at least, that they have good taste. Do you want the beads back?"

"Lord, no! Chuck 'em in the ocean. Can you recommend any other novelties? Anything you think they might like?"

"Well," said Hawthorne, "I've speculated about tools such as they could use, designed to be held in the mouth and—"

"We'd better experiment with that right here, before getting samples from Earth," said Jevons. "I'm skeptical, myself. What use would a hammer or a knife be to a cetoid?"

"Actually," said Hawthorne, "I was thinking about a saw. To cut coralite blocks and make shelters on the sea bottom."

"Whatever for?" asked McClellan, astonished.

"I don't know," said Hawthorne. "There's so little we know. Probably not shelters against undersea weather—though that might not be absolutely fantastic, either. There are cold currents in the depths, I'm sure. What I had in mind, was—I've seen scars on many cetoids, like teeth marks, but left by something gigantic."

"It's an idea." Jevons smiled. "It's good to have you back ideating, Nat. And it's decent of you to volunteer to take your station watch the first thing, right after your return. That wasn't expected of you."

"Ah, he's got memories to soften the monotony," said McClellan. "I saw him in a hostess joint in Chicago. Brother, was he making time!"

The air masks hid most expression, but Hawthorne felt his ears redden. Jevons minded his own business, but he was old-fashioned, and more like a father than the implacable man in black whom Hawthorne dimly remembered. One did not boast of Earthside escapades in Jevons' presence.

"I want to mull over the new biochemical data and sketch out a research program in the light of it," said the ecologist hastily. "And, too, renew my acquaintance with Oscar. I was really touched when he gave me that gem. I felt like a louse, handing it over to the Company."

"At the price it'll command, I'd feel lousy too," said McClellan.

"No, I don't mean that. I mean—Oh, run along, jet-boy!"

Hawthorne and Jevons stood watching the spacecraft taxi off across the water. Its rise was slow at first—much fire and noise, then a gradual acceleration. But by the time it had pierced the clouds, it was a meteor in reverse flight. And still it moved faster, streaking through the planet's thick permanent overcast until it was high in the sky and the clouds to the man inside did not show as gray but as blinding white.

So many miles high, even the air of Venus grew thin and piercingly cold, and water vapor was frozen out. Thus absorption spectra had not revealed to Earthbound astronomers that this planet was one vast ocean. The first explorers had expected desert and instead they had found water. But still McClellan rode his lightning horse, faster and higher, into a blaze of constellations.

When the rocket noise had faded, Hawthorne came out of his reverie and said: "At least we've created one beautiful thing with all our ingenuity—just one, space travel. I'm not sure how much destruction and ugliness that makes up for."

"Don't be so cynical," said Jevons. "We've also done Beethoven sonatas, Rembrandt portraits, Shakespearean drama . . . and you, of all people, should be able to rhapsodize on the beauty of science itself."

"But not of technology," said Hawthorne. "Science, pure ordered knowledge, yes. I'll rank that beside anything your Beethovens and Rembrandts ever made. But this machinery business, gouging a planet so that more people can pullulate—" It was good to be back with Jevons, he thought. You could dare be serious talking to the captain.

"You've been saddened by your furlough," said the old man. "It should be the other way around. You're too young for sadness."

"New England ancestors." Hawthorne tried to

grin. "My chromosomes insist that I disapprove of something."

"I am luckier," said Jevons. "Like Pastor Grundtvig, a couple of centuries back, I have made a marvelous discovery. God is *good*."

"If one can believe in God. You know I can't. The concept just doesn't square with the mess humanity has made of things on Earth."

"God has to leave us free, Nat. Would you rather be an efficient, will-less puppet?"

"Or He may not care," said Hawthorne. "Assuming He does exist, have we any strong empirical grounds for thinking we're His particular favorites? Man may be just another discarded experiment, like the dinosaurs, set aside to gather dust and die. How do you know Oscar's breed don't have souls? And how do you know we do?"

"It's unwise to romanticize the cetoids," said Jevons. "They show a degree of intelligence, I'll concede. But—"

"I know. But they don't build spaceships. They haven't got hands, and of course fire is impossible for them. I've heard all that before, Cap. I've argued it a hundred times, here and on Earth. But how can we tell what the cetoids do and don't do on the sea floor? They can stay underwater for days at a time, remember. And even here, I've watched those games of 'tag' they play. They are very remarkable games in some respects.

"I swear I can see a pattern, too intricate to make much sense to me, but a distinct pattern notwithstanding. An art form, like our ballet, but using the wind and currents and waves to dance to. And how do you account for their display of taste and discrimination in music, individual taste, so that Oscar goes for those old jazz numbers, and Sambo won't come near them but will pay you carat for carat if you give him some Buxtehude? Why trade at all?"

"Pack rats trade on Earth," said Jevons.

"Now you're being unfair. The first expedition rafting here thought it was pack rat psychology, too—cetoids snatching oddments off the lower deck and leaving bits of shell, coralite, finally jewels. Sure, I know all that. But by now it's developed into too intricate a price system. The cetoids are shrewd about it—honest, but shrewd. They've got our scale of values figured to an inch: everything from a conchoidal shell to a firegem. Completely to the inch—keep that in mind.

"And why should mere animals go for music tapes, sealed in plastic and run off a thermionic cell? Or for waterproof reproductions of our great art? As for tools? They're often seen helped by schools of specialized fish, rounding up sea creatures, slaughtering and flensing, harvesting pseudokelp. They don't need hands, Cap! They use *live* tools!"

"I have been here a good many years," said Jevons dryly.

Hawthorne flushed. "Sorry. I gave that lecture so often Earthside, to people who didn't even have the data, that it's become a reflex."

"I don't mean to down-grade our damp friends," said the captain. "But you know as well as I do that all the years of trying to establish communication with them, symbols, signals—everything has failed."

"Are you sure?" asked Hawthorne.

"What?"

"How do you know the cetoids have not learned our alphabet off those slates?"

"Well . . . after all—"

"They might have good reasons for not wanting to take a grease pencil in their jaws and scribble messages back to us. A degree of wariness, perhaps. Let's face it, Cap. We're the aliens here, the monsters. Or maybe they simply aren't interested: our vessels are fun to play with, our goods amusing enough to be worth trading for, but we ourselves seem drab. Or, of course—and I think this is the most probable explanation—our minds are too strange. Consider the two planets, how different they are. How alike would you expect the thinking of two wholly different races to be?"

"An interesting speculation," said Jevons. "Not new, of course."

"Well, I'll go set out the latest gadgets for them," said Hawthorne. He walked a few paces, then stopped and turned around.

"You know," he said, "I'm being a fool. Oscar did communicate with us, only last evening. A perfectly unambiguous message, in the form of a firegem."

IV

HAWTHORNE WENT PAST a heavy machine gun, loaded with explosive slugs. He despised the rule that an entire arsenal must always be kept ready. When had Venus ever threatened men with anything but the impersonal consequences of ignorance?

He continued on along the trading pier. Its metal gleamed, nearly awash. Basketlike containers had been lowered overnight, with standard goods. These included recordings and pictures the cetoids already knew, but always seemed to want more of. Did each individual desire some, or did they distribute these things around their world, in the undersea equivalent of museums or libraries?

Then there were the little plastic containers of sodium chloride, aqua ammonia, and other materials, whose taste the cetoids apparently enjoyed. Lacking continents to leach out, the Venusian ocean was less mineralized than Earth's, and these chemicals were exotic. Nevertheless the cetoids had refused plastibulbs of certain compounds, such as the permanganates—and later biochemical research had shown that these were poisonous to Venusian life.

But how had the cetoids known that, without ever crushing a bulb between teeth? They just knew, that was all. Human senses and human science didn't exhaust all the information in the cosmos. The standard list of goods had come to include a few toys, like floating balls, which the cetoids used for some appallingly rough games; and specially devised dressings, to put on injuries . . .

Oh, nobody doubted that Oscar was much more intelligent than a chimpanzee, thought Hawthorne. The problem had always been, was he as highly intelligent as a man?

He pulled up the baskets and took out the equally standardized payments which had been left in them. There were firegems, small and perfect or large and flawed. One was both big and faultless, like a round drop of rainbow. There were particularly beautiful specimens of coralite, which would be made into ornaments on Earth, and several kinds of exquisite shell.

There were specimens of marine life for study, most of them never before seen by Man. How many million species would an entire planet hold? There were a few tools, lost overboard, and only now freed of ooze by shifting currents; a lump of something unidentifiable, light and yellow and greasy to the touch, perhaps a biological product like ambergris, possibly only of slight interest and possibly offering a clue to an entire new field of chemistry. The plunder of a world rattled into Hawthorne's collection boxes.

All novelties had a fixed, rather small value. If the humans took the next such offering, its price would go up, and so on until a stable fee was reached, not too steep for the Earthmen or too low to be worth the cetoids' trouble. It was amazing how detailed a bargain you could strike without language.

Hawthorne looked down at Oscar. The big fellow had nosed up close to the pier and now lay idly swinging his tail. The blue sheen along his upcurved back was lovely to watch.

"You know," murmured Hawthorne, "for years all Earth has been chortling over your giving us such nearly priceless stuff for a few cheaply made geegaws. But I've begun to wonder if it isn't reciprocal. Just how rare are firegems on Venus?

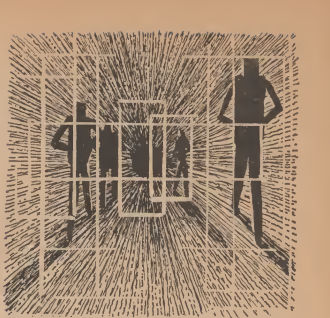
Oscar spouted a little and rolled a wickedly gleaming eye. A curious expression crossed his face. Doubtless one would be very unscientific to call it a grin. But Hawthorne felt sure that a grin was what Oscar intended.

"Okay," he said. "Okay. Now let's see what you think of our gr-r-reat new products, brought to you after years of research for better living. Each and every one of these products, ladies and gentlecetoids, has been tested in our spotless laboratories, and don't think it was easy to test the patent spot remover in particular. Now—'

The music bubbles of Schonberg had been rejected. Perhaps other atonalists would be liked, but with spaceship mass ratios what they were, the experiment wasn't going to be done for a long time. On the other hand, a tape of traditional Japanese songs was gone and a two-carat gem had been left, twice the standard price for a novelty: in effect, some cetoid was asking for more of the same.

As usual, every contemporary pictorial artist was refused, but then, Hawthorne agreed they were not to his taste either. Nor did any cetoid want Picasso (middle period), but Mondrian and Matisse had gone well. A doll had been accepted at low valuation, a mere bit of mineral: "Okay, we (I?) will take just this one sample, but don't bother bringing any more."

Once again, the waterproof illustrated books had been rejected; the cetoids had never bought books, after the first few. It was an idiosyncrasy, among others, which had led many researchers to doubt



their essential basic intelligence and perception.

That doesn't follow, thought Hawthorne. *They haven't got hands, so a printed text isn't natural for them. Because of sheer beauty—or interest, or humor, or whatever they get out of it—some of our best art is worth the trouble of carrying underwater and preserving. But if they're looking for a factual record, they may well have more suitable methods. Such as what? God knows. Maybe they have perfect memories. Maybe, by sheer telepathy or something, they build their messages into the crystal structure of stones on the ocean bed.*

Oscar bustled along the pier, following the man. Hawthorne squatted down and rubbed the cetoid's smooth wet brow. "Hey, what do you think about me?" he asked aloud. "Do you wonder if *I* think? All right. All right. My breed came down from the sky and built floating metal settlements and brought all sorts of curious goodies. But ants and termites have pretty intricate behavior patterns, and you've got similar things on Venus."

Oscar snorted and nosed Hawthorne's ankles. Out in the water, his people were playing, and foam burned white against purple where they arched skyward and came down again. Still further out, on the hazy edge of vision, a few adults were at work, rounding up a school of "fish" with the help of three tame(?) species. They seemed to be enjoying the task.

"You have no right to be as smart as you are, Oscar," said Hawthorne. "Intelligence is supposed to evolve in response to a rapidly changing environment, and the sea isn't supposed to be changeable enough. Well, maybe the Terrestrial sea isn't. But this is Venus, and what do we know about Venus? Tell me, Oscar, are your dog-type and cattle-type fish just dull-witted animal slaves like the aphids kept by ants, or are they real domestic animals, consciously trained? It's got to be the latter. I'll continue to insist it is, until ants develop a fondness for van Gogh and Biederbecke."

Oscar sounded, drenching Hawthorne with carbonated sea water. It foamed spectacularly, and tingled on his skin. A small wind crossed the world, puffing the wetness out of his garments. He

sighed. The cetoids were like children, never staying put—another reason why so many psychologists rated them only a cut above Terrestrial apes.

A logically unwarranted conclusion, to say the least. At the quick pace of Venusian life, urgent business might well arise on a second's notice. Or, even if the cetoids were merely being capricious, were they stupid on that account? Man was a heavy-footed beast, who forgot how to play if he was not always being reminded. Here on Venus there might just naturally be more joy in living.

I shouldn't run down my own species the way I do, thought Hawthorne. *"All centuries but this and every country but his own." We're different from Oscar, that's all. But by the same token, is he any worse than us?*

He turned his mind to the problem of designing a saw which a cetoid could handle. Handle? Manipulate? Not when a mouth was all you had! If the species accepted such tools in trade, it would go a long way toward proving them comparable to man. And if they didn't, it would only show that they had other desires, not necessarily inferior ones.

Quite conceivably. Oscar's race was more intellectual than mankind. Why not? Their bodies and their environment debarred them from such material helps as fire, chipped stone, forged metal, or pictograms. But might this not force their minds into subtler channels? A race of philosophers, unable to talk to man because it had long ago forgotten baby talk . . .

Sure, it was a far-fetched hypothesis. But the indisputable fact remained, Oscar was far more than a clever animal, even if he was not on a level with Man.

Yet, if Oscar's people had evolved to, say, the equivalent of Pithecanthropus, they had done so because something in Venusian conditions had put a premium on intelligence. The same factor should continue to operate. In another half-million years or so, almost certainly, the cetoids would have as much brain and soul as Man today. (And Man himself might be extinct, or degraded.) Maybe more soul—more sense of beauty and mercy and laughter—if you extrapolated their present behavior.

In short, Oscar was (a) already equal to Man, or (b) already beyond Man, or (c) on the way up, and his descendants would in time achieve (a) and then (b). Welcome, my brother!

The pier quivered. Hawthorne glanced down again. Oscar had returned. He was nosing the metal impatiently and making gestures with his foreflipper. Hawthorne went over and looked at him. Oscar curved up his tail and whacked his own back, all the time beckoning.

"Hey, wait!" Hawthorne got the idea. He hoped. "Wait, do you want me to come for a ride?" he asked.

The cetoid blinked both eyes. Was the blink the counterpart of a nod? And if so, had Oscar actually understood the English words?

Hawthorne hurried off to the oxygen electrolyzer. Skin-diving equipment was stored in the locker beside it. He wriggled into the flexible, heat-retaining Long John. Holding his breath, he unclipped his mask from the tank and air mixer he wore, and put on a couple of oxynitro flasks instead, thus converting it to an aqualung.

For a moment he hesitated. Should he inform Jevons, or at least take the collection boxes inside? No, to hell with it! This wasn't Earth, where you couldn't leave an empty beer bottle unwatched without having it stolen. Oscar might lose patience. The Venusians—damn it, he *would* call them that, and the devil take scientific caution!—had rescued distressed humans, but never before had offered a ride without utilitarian purpose. Hawthorne's pulse beat loudly.

He ran back. Oscar lay level with the pier. Hawthorne straddled him, grasping a small cervical fin and leaning back against the muscular dorsal. The long body glided from the station. Water rippled sensuously around Hawthorne's bare feet. Where his face was not masked, the wind was fresh upon it. Oscar's flukes churned up foam like a snowstorm.

Low overhead there scudded rainclouds, and lightning veinèd the west. A small polypoid went by, its keelfin submerged, its iridescent membrane-sail driving it on a broad reach. A nearby cetoid slapped the water with his tail in a greeting.

The motion was so smooth that Hawthorne was finally startled to glance behind and see the station five miles off. Then Oscar submerged.

Hawthorne had done a lot of skin-diving, as well as more extensive work in submarines or armor. He was not surprised by the violet clarity of the first yards, nor the rich darkening as he went on down. The glowfish which passed him like rainbow comets were familiar. But he had never before felt the living play of muscles between his thighs; suddenly he knew why a few wealthy men on Earth still kept horses.

When he was in cool, silent, absolute blackness, he felt Oscar begin to travel. Almost, he was torn off by the stream; he lost himself in the sheer exhilaration of hanging on. With other senses than vision he was aware how they twisted through caves and canyons in buried mountains. An hour had passed when light glowed before him, a spark. It took another half hour to reach its source.

He had often seen luminous coralite banks. But never this one. It lay not far from the station as Venusian distances went, but even a twenty-mile radius sweeps out a big territory and men had not chanced by here. And the usual reef was a good bit like its Terrestrial counterpart, a ragged jumble of spires, bluffs, and grottos, eerie but unorganized beauty.

Here, the coralite was shaped. A city of merfolk opened up before Hawthorne.

Afterward he did not remember just how it looked. The patterns were so strange that his mind was not trained to register them. He knew there were delicate fluted columns, arched chambers with arabesque walls, a piling of clean masses at one spot and a Gothic humoresque elsewhere. He saw towers enspiraled like a narwhal's tusk, arches and buttresses of fragile filigree, an overall unity of pattern at once as light as spindrift and as strong as the world-circling tide, immense, complex, and serene.

A hundred species of coralite, each with its own distinctive glow, were blended to make the place, so

that there was a subtle play of color, hot reds and icy blues and living greens and yellows, against ocean black. And from some source, he never knew what, came a thin crystal sound, a continuous contrapuntal symphony which he did not understand but which recalled to him frost flowers on the windows of his childhood home.

Oscar let him swim about freely and look. He saw a few other cetoids, also drifting along, often accompanied by young. But plainly, they didn't live here. Was this a memorial, an art gallery, or—Hawthorne didn't know. The place was huge, it reached farther downward than he could see, farther than he could go before pressure killed him, at least half a mile straight down to the sea bottom. Yet this miraculous place had never been fashioned for any "practical" reason. Or had it? Perhaps the Venusians recognized what Earth had forgotten, though the ancient Greeks had known it—that the contemplation of beauty is essential to thinking life.

The underwater blending of so much that was constructively beautiful could not be a freak of nature. But neither had it been carved out of some pre-existing mountain No matter how closely he looked, and the flameless fire was adequate to see by, Hawthorne found no trace of chisel or mould. He could only decide that in some unknown way, Oscar's people had grown this thing.

He lost himself. It was Oscar who finally nudged him—a reminder that he had better go back before he ran out of air. When they reached the pier and Hawthorne had stepped off, Oscar nuzzled the man's foot, very briefly, like a kiss, and then he sounded in a tremendous splash.

V

TOWARD THE CLOSE of the forty-three-hour daylight period, the boats came straggling in. For most it had been a routine shift, a few dozen discoveries, books and instruments filled with data to be wrestled with and perhaps understood. The men landed wearily, unloaded their craft, stashed their findings and went off for food and rest. Later would come the bull sessions.

Wim Dykstra and Jimmy Cheng-tung had returned earlier than most, with armfuls of recording meters. Hawthorne knew in a general way what they were doing. By seismographs, sonic probes, core studies, mineral analyses, measurements of temperature and radioactivity and a hundred other facets, they tried to understand the planet's inner structure. It was part of an old enigma. Venus had 80% of Earth's mass, and the chemical composition was nearly identical.

The two planets should have been sisters. Instead, the Venusian magnetic field was so weak that iron compasses were useless; the surface was so nearly smooth that no land rose above the water; volcanic and seismic activity were not only less, but showed unaccountably different patterns, lava flows and shock waves here had their own laws; the rocks were of odd types and distributions. And there was a galaxy of other technicalities which Hawthorne did not pretend to follow.

Jevons had remarked that in the past weeks Dykstra had been getting more and more excited about

something. The Dutchman was the cautious type of scientist, who said never a word about his results until they were nailed down past argument. He had been spending Earth-days on end in calculations. When someone finally insisted on a turn at the computer, Dykstra often continued figuring with a pencil. One gathered he was well on the way to solving the geological problem of Venus.

"Or aphroditological?" Jevons had murmured. "But I know Wim. There's more behind this than curiosity, or a chance at glory. Wim has something very big afoot, and very close to his heart. I hope it won't take him too long!"

Today Dykstra had rushed downstairs and sworn nobody would get at the computer until he was through. Cheng-tung hung around for a while, brought him sandwiches, and finally wandered up on deck with the rest of the station to watch Shorty McClellan come in again.

Hawthorne sought him out. "Hey, Jimmy," he said. "You don't have to keep up that mysterious act. You're among friends."

The Chinese grinned. "I have not the right to speak," he said. "I am only the apprentice. When I have my own doctorate, then you will hear me chatter till you wish I'd learn some Oriental inscrutability."

"Yes, but hell, it's obvious what you're doing in general outline," said Hawthorne. "I understand Wim has been calculating in advance what sort of data he ought to get if his theory is sound. Now he's reducing those speculative assumptions for comparison. So okay, what *is* his theory?"

"There is nothing secret about its essence," said Cheng-tung. "It is only a confirmation of a hypothesis made more than a hundred years ago, before anyone had even left Earth. The idea is that Venus has a core unlike our planet's, and that this accounts for the gross differences we've observed.

"Dr. Dykstra has been elaborating it, and data so far have confirmed his beliefs. Today we brought in what may be the crucial measurements—chiefly seismic echoes from depth bombs exploded in undersea wells."

"M-m-m, yeah, I do know something about it."

Hawthorne stared across the ocean. No cetoids were in sight. Had they gone down to their beautiful city? And if so, why? *It's a good thing the questions aren't answered,* he thought. *If there were no more riddles on Venus, I don't know what I'd do with my life.*

"The core here is supposed to be considerably smaller and less dense than Earth's, isn't it?" he went on. His curiosity was actually no more than mild, but he wanted to make conversation while they waited for the spacecraft.

The young Chinese had arrived on the same ship which had taken Hawthorne home to furlough. Now they would be together for a long time, and it was well to show quick friendliness. He seemed a likeable little fellow anyhow.

"True," nodded Cheng-tung. "Though 'supposed' is the wrong word. The general assertion was proven quite satisfactorily quite some ago. Since then Dr. Dykstra has been studying the details."

"I seem to have read somewhere that Venus ought by rights not to have a core at all," said Hawthorne. "Not enough mass to make enough pressure, or something of the sort. The planet ought to have a continuous rocky character right to the center, like Mars."

Your memory is not quite correct," said Cheng-tung. His sarcasm was gentle and inoffensive. "But then, the situation is a trifle complex. You see, if you use quantum laws to calculate the curve of pressure at a planet's center, versus the planet's mass, you do not get a simple figure.

"Up to about eight-tenths of an Earth-mass it rises smoothly, but there is a change at what is called the Y-point. The curve doubles back, as if mass were decreasing with added pressure, and only after it has thus jogged back a certain amount—equivalent to about two percent of Earth's mass—does the curve resume a steady rise."

"What happens at this Y-point?" asked Hawthorne rather absently.

"The force becomes great enough to start collapsing the central matter. First crystals, which had already assumed their densest possible form, break down completely. Then, as more mass is added to the planet, the atoms themselves collapse. Not their nuclei, of course. That requires mass on the order of a star's.

"But the electron shells are squeezed into the smallest possible compass. Only when this stage of quantum degeneracy has been reached—when the atoms will not yield any further, and there is a true core, with a specific gravity of better than ten—only thereafter will increased mass again mean a steady rise in internal pressure."

"Uh . . . yes. I do remember Wim speaking of it, quite some time ago. But he never did like to talk shop, either, except to fellow specialists. Otherwise he'd rather debate history. I take it, then, that Venus has a core which is not collapsed as much as it might be?"

"Yes. At its present internal temperature, Venus is just past the Y-point. If more mass should somehow be added to this planet, its radius would actually decrease. This, not very incidentally, accounts rather well for the observed peculiarities. You can see how the accretion of material in the beginning, when the planets were formed, reached a point where Venus began to shrink—and then, as it happened, stopped, not going on to produce maximum core density and thereafter a steadily increasing size like Earth.

"This means a smooth planet, with no upthrust masses to reach above the hydrosphere and form continents. With no exposed rocks, there was nothing to take nearly all the CO_2 from the air. So life evolved for a different atmosphere. The relatively large mantle, as well as the low-density core, lead to a non-Terrestrial seismology, vulcanology, and mineralogy. The Venusian core is less conductive than Earth's—conductivity tends to increase with degeneracy—so the currents circulating in it are much smaller. Hence, the weak planetary magnetism."

"Very interesting," said Hawthorne. "But why the big secret? I mean, it's a good job of work, but all you've shown is that Venusian atoms obey quantum laws. That's hardly a surprise to spring on the universe."

Cheng-tung's small body shivered a bare trifle. It has been more difficult than one might suspect," he said. "But yes, it is true. Our data now reveal unequivocally that Venus has just the type of core which it could have under present conditions."

Since Cheng-tung had during the night hours asked Hawthorne to correct any mistakes in his excellent English, the American said, "You mean, the type of core it should have."

"I mean precisely what I said, and it is not a tautology." The grin was dazzling. Cheng-tung hugged himself and did a few dance steps. "But it is Dr. Dykstra's brain child. Let him midwife it." Abruptly he changed the conversation.

Hawthorne felt puzzled, but dismissed the emotion. And presently McClellan's ferry blazed out of the clouds and came to rest. It was a rather splendid sight, but Hawthorne found himself watching it with only half an eye. Mostly he was still down under the ocean, in the living temple of the Venusians.

Several hours past nightfall, Hawthorne laid the sheaf of reports down on his desk. Chris Diehl and Mamoru Matsumoto had done a superb task. Even in this earliest pioneering stage, their concept of enzymatic symbiosis offered possibilities beyond imagination. Here there was work for a century of science to come. And out of that work would be gotten a deeper insight into living processes, including those of Earth, than men had yet hoped for.

And who could tell what practical benefits? The prospect was heartcatching. Hawthorne had already realized a little of what he himself could do, and yes, in a hazy fashion he could even begin to see, if not understand, how the Venusians had created that lovely thing beneath the water . . . But a person can only concentrate so long at a time. Hawthorne left his cubbyhole office and wandered down a passageway toward the wardroom.

The station murmured around him. He saw a number of its fifty men at work. Some did their turn at routine chores, maintenance of apparatus, sorting and baling of trade goods, and the rest. Others puttered happily with test tubes, microscopes spectroscopes, and less understandable equipment. Or they perched on lab benches, brewing coffee

over a Bunsen burner while they argued, or sat feet on desk, pipe in mouth, hands behind head, and labored. Those who noticed Hawthorne hailed him as he passed. The station itself muttered familiarly, engines, ventilators, a faint quiver from the surrounding forever unrestful waters.

It was good to be home again.

Hawthorne went up a companionway, down another corridor, and into the wardroom. Jevons sat in a corner with his beloved Montaigne. McClellan and Cheng-tung were shooting dice. Otherwise the long room was deserted. Its transparent wall opened on seas which tonight were almost black, roiled and laced with gold luminosity.

The sky seemed made from infinite layerings of blue and gray, a low haze diffusing the aurora and a rainstorm was approaching from the west with its blackness and lightning. The only sign of life was a forty-foot sea snake, quickly writhing from one horizon to another, its crested jaws dripping phosphorescence.

McClellan looked up. "Hi, Nat," he said. "Want to sit in?"

"Right after Earth leave?" said Hawthorne. "What would I use for money?" He went over to the samovar and tapped himself a cup.

"Eighter from Decatur," chanted Jimmy Cheng-tung. "Come on, boys, let's see that good old Maxwell distribution."

Hawthorne sat down at the table. He was still wondering how to break his news about Oscar and the holy place. He should have reported it immediately to Jevons, but for hours after returning he had been dazed, and then the inadequacy of words had reared a barrier. He was too conditioned against showing emotion to want to speak about it at all.

He had, though, prepared some logical conclusions. The Venusians were at least as intelligent as the builders of the Taj Mahal; they had finally decided the biped strangers were fit to be shown something and would presumably have a whole planet's riches and mysteries to show on later occasions. Hawthorne scalded his tongue on red bitterness.

"Cap," he said.

"Yes?" Jevons lowered his dog-eared volume, patient as always at the interruption.

"Something happened today," said Hawthorne.

Jevons looked at him keenly. Cheng-tung finished a throw but did not move further, nor did McClellan. Outside there could be heard the heavy tread of waves and a rising wind.

"Go ahead," invited Jevons finally.

"I was on the trading pier and while I was standing there—"

Wim Dykstra entered. His shoes rang on the metal floor. Hawthorne's voice stumbled into silence. The Dutchman dropped fifty clipped-together sheets of paper on the table. It seemed they should have clashed, like a sword thrown in challenge, but only the wind spoke.

Dykstra's eyes blazed. "I have it," he said.

"By God!" exploded Cheng-tung.

"What on Earth?" said Jevons' mild old voice.

"You mean off Earth," said McClellan. But tightness grew in him as he regarded Dykstra.

The geophysicist looked at them all for several seconds. He laughed curtly. "I was trying to think

of a suitable dramatic phrase," he said. "None came to mind. So much for historic moments."

McClellan picked up the papers, shuddered, and dropped them again. "Look, math is okay, but let's keep it within reason," he said. "What do those squiggles mean?"

Dykstra took out a cigarct and made a ceremony of lighting it. When smoke was in his lungs, he said shakily: "I have spent the past weeks working out the details of an old and little-known hypothesis, first made by Ramsey in nineteen fifty-one, and applying it to Venusian conditions. The data obtained here have just revealed themselves as final proof of my beliefs."

"There isn't a man on this planet who doesn't hope for a Nobel Prize," said Jevons.

His trick of soothing dryness didn't work this time. Dykstra pointed the glowing cigaret like a weapon and answered: "I do not care about that. I am interested in the largest and most significant engineering project of history."

They waited. Hawthorne began for no good reason to feel cold.

"The colonization of Venus," said Dykstra.

VI

DYKSTRA'S WORDS FELL into silence as if into a well. And then, like the splash, Shorty McClellan said, "Huh? Isn't the Mindanao Deep closer to home?"

But Hawthorne spilled hot tea over his own fingers.

Dykstra began to pace, up and down, smoking in short nervous drags. His words rattled out: "The basic reason for the steady decay of Terrestrial civilization is what one may call crampedness. Every day we have more people and fewer resources. There are no longer any exotic foreigners to challenge and stimulate, any frontier . . . no, we can only sit and brew an eventual, inevitable atomic civil war.

"If we had some place to go, what a difference! Oh, one could not relieve much population pressure by emigration to another planet—though an increased demand for such transportation would surely lead to better, more economical spaceships. But the fact that men could go, somehow, perhaps to hardship but surely to freedom and opportinity, that fact would make a difference even to the stay-at-homes. At worst, if civilization on Earth must die, its best elements would be on Venus, carrying forward what was good, forgetting what was evil. A second chance for humankind—do you see?"

"It's a pleasant theory, at least," said Jevons slowly, "but as for Venus. No, I don't believe a permanent colony forced to live on elaborated rafts and to wear masks every minute outdoors could be successful."

"Of course not," said Dykstra. "That is why I spoke of an engineering project. The transformation of Venus to another Earth."

"Now wait a minute!" cried Hawthorne, springing up.

No one noticed him. For them, in that moment, only the dark man who spoke like a prophet had reality. Hawthorne clenched his fists together and sat down, muscle by muscle, forcing himself.

Dykstra said through a veil of smoke: "Do you know the structure of this planet? Its mass puts it just beyond the Y-point—"

Even then, McClellan had to say, "No, I don't know. Tell me, w'y point?"

But that was automatic, and ignored. Dykstra was watching Jevons, who nodded.

The geophysicist went on, rapidly, "Now in the region where the mass-pressure curve jogs back, it is not a single-valued function. A planet with the mass of Venus has three possible central pressures. There is the one it does actually have, corresponding to a small core of comparatively low density and a large rocky mantle. But there is also a higher-pressure situation, where the planet has a large degenerate core, hence a greater overall density and smaller radius. And, on the other side of the Y-point, there is the situation of lower central pressure. This means that the planet has no true core but, like Mars, is merely built in layers of rock and magma.

"Now such an ambiguous condition is unstable. It is possible for the small core which exists to change phase. This would not be true on Earth, which has too much mass, or on Mars. which does not have enough. But Venus is very near the critical point. If the lower mantle collapsed, to make a larger core and smaller total radius, the released energy would appear as vibrations and ultimately as heat."

He paused an instant, as if to give weight to his words. "If, on the other hand, the at-present collapsed atoms of the small core were to revert to a higher energy level, there would be blast waves traveling to the surface, disruption on a truly astronomical scale—and, when things had quieted down, Venus would be larger and less dense than at present, *without any core at all.*"

McClellan said, "Wait a bit, pal! Do you mean this damn golf ball is liable to explode under us at any minute?"

"Oh, no," said Dykstra more calmly. "Venus does have a mass somewhat above the critical for existing temperatures. Its core is in a metastable rather than unstable condition, and there would be no reason to worry for billions of years. Also, if temperature did increase enough to cause an expansion, it would not be quite as violent as Ramsey believed, because the Venusian mass *is* greater than his Y-point value. The explosion would not actually throw much material into space. But it would, of course, raise continents."

"Hey!" That was from Jevons. He jumped up. (Hawthornc sat slumped into nightmare. Outside, the wind lifted, and the storm moved closer across the sea.) "You mean . . . increased planetary radius, magnifying surface irregularities—"

"And the upthrust of lighter rocks," added Dykstra, nodding. "It is all here in my calculations. I can even predict the approximate area of dry land resulting—about equal to that on Earth. The newly exposed rocks will consume carbon dioxide in huge amounts, to form carbonates. At the same time, specially developed strains of Terrestrial photosynthetic life—very like those now used to maintain the air on spaceships—can be sown.

"They will thrive, liberating oxygen in quantity,

until a blance is struck. I can show that this balance can be made identical with the balance which now exists in Earth's atmosphere. The oxygen will form an ozone layer, thus blocking the now dangerous level of ultraviolet radiation. Eventually, another Earth. Warmer, of course—a milder climate, nowhere too hot for man—cloudy still, because of the closer sun—but nevertheless, New Earth!"

Hawthorne shook himself, trying to find a strength which seemed drained from him. He thought dully that one good practical objection would end it all, and then he could wake up.

"Hold on, there," he said in a stranger's voice. "It's a clever idea, but these processes you speak of —I mean, all right, perhaps continents could be raised in hours or days, but changing the atmosphere, that would take millions of years. Too long to do humans any good."

"Ah, no," said Dykstra. "This also I have investigated. There are such things as catalysts. Also, the growth of micro-organisms under favorable conditions, without any natural enemies, presents no difficulties. Using only known techniques, I calculate that Venus could be made so a man can safely walk naked on its surface in fifty years.

"In fact, if we wanted to invest more effort, money, and research, it could be done faster. To be sure, then must come the grinding of stone into soil, the fertilizing and planting, the slow painful establishment of an ecology. But that, again, needs only to be started. The first settlers on Venus could make oases for themselves, miles wide, and thereafter expand these at their leisure. By using specialized plants, agriculture can even be practiced in the original desert.

"Oceanic life would expand much more rapidly, of course, without any human attentions. Hence the Venusians could soon carry on fishing and pelagiculture. I have good estimates to show that the development of the planet could even exceed the population growth. The firstcomers would have hope—their grandchildren will have wealth!"

Hawthorne sat back. "There are already Venusians," he mumbled.

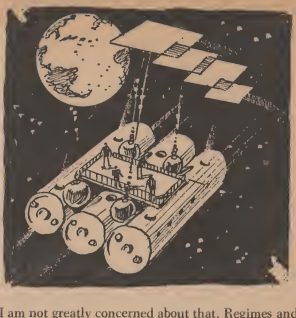
Nobody heard him. "Say," objected McClellan, "how do you propose to blow up this balloon in the first place,"

"Is it not obvious?" said Dykstra. "Increased core temperature can supply the energy to push a few tons of matter into a higher quantum state. This would lower the pressure enough to trigger the rest. A single large hydrogen bomb at the very center of the planet would do it. Since this is unfortunately not attainable, we must tap several thousand deep wells in the ocean floor, and touch off a major nuclear explosion in all simultaneously.

"That would be no trick at all. Very little fallout would result, and what did get into the atmosphere would be gone again in a few years. The bombs are available. In fact, they exist already in far larger amounts than would be needed for this project. Would this not be a better use for them than using them as a stockpile to destroy human life?"

"Who would pay the bill?" asked Cheng-tung unexpectedly.

"Whatever government has the foresight—if all the Governments on Earth cannot get together on it.



I am not greatly concerned about that. Regimes and policies go, nations die, cultures are forgotten. But I want to be sure that *Man* will survive. The cost would not be great—comparable, at most, to one military satellite, and the rewards are enormous even on the crassest immediate terms. Consider what a wealth of uranium and other materials, now in short supply on Earth, would become accessible."

Dykstra turned to the transparent wall. The storm had reached them. Under the station caissons, the sea raged and struck and shattered in radiant foam. The deep, strong force of those blows traveled up through steel and concrete like the play of muscles in a giant's shoulders. Rain began to smash in great sheets on the deck. A continuous lightning flickered across Dykstra's lean countenance, and thunder toned.

"A world," he whispered.

Hawthorne stood up again. He leaned forward, his fingertips resting on the table. They were cold. His voice still came to him like someone else's. "No," he said. "Absolutely not."

"Eh?" Dykstra turned almost reluctantly from watching the storm. "What is wrong, Nat?"

"You'd sterilize a living planet," said Hawthorne.

"Well . . . true," admitted Dykstra. "Yes. Humanely, though. The first shock wave would destroy all organisms before they even had time to feel it."

"But that's murder!" cried Hawthorne.

"Come, now," said Dykstra. "Let us not get sentimental. I admit it will be a pity to destroy life so interesting, but when children starve and one nation after another is driven to despotism—" He shrugged and smiled.

Jevons, still seated, stroked a thin hand across his book, as if he wanted to recall a friend five hundred years dead. There was trouble on his face. "This is too sudden to digest, Wim," he said. "You must give us time."

"Oh, there will be time enough, years of it," said Dykstra. He laughed. "First my report must go to Earth, and be published, and debated, and publicized, and wrangled about, and then they will send elaborate expeditions to do my work all over again,

and they will haggle and—Have no fears, it will be at least a decade before anything is actually done. And thereafter we of the station, with our experience, will be quite vital to the project."

"Shucks," said McClellan, speaking lightly to conceal the way he felt, "I wanted to take a picnic lunch and watch the planet go up next Fourth of July."

"I don't know." Jevons stared into emptiness. "There's a question of . . . prudence? Call it what you will, but Venus can teach us so much as it is. A thousand years is not too long to study everything here. We may gain a few more continents at the price of understanding what life is all about, or the means for immortality—if that's a goal to be desired —or perhaps a philosophy. I don't know."

"Well, it is debatable," conceded Dykstra. "But let all mankind debate it, then."

Jimmy Cheng-tung smiled at Hawthorne. "I believe the captain is right," he said. "And I can see your standpoint, as a scientist. It is not fair to take your lifework away from you. I shall certainly argue in favor of waiting at least a hundred years."

"That may be too long," warned Dykstra. "With out some safety valve, technological civilization on Earth may not last another century."

"You don't understand!"

Hawthorne shouted it at them, as he looked into their eyes. Dykstra's gaze in particular caught the light in such a way that it seemed blank, Dykstra was a skull with two white circles for eyes. Hawthorne had the feeling that he was talking to deaf men. Or men already dead.

"You don't understand," he repeated. "It isn't my job, or science, or any such thing I'm worried about. It's the brutal fact of murder. The murder of an entire intelligent race. How would you like it if beings came from Jupiter and proposed to give Earth a hydrogen atmosphere? My God, what kind of monsters are we, that we can even think seriously about such a thing?"

"Oh, no!" muttered McClellan. "Here we go again. Lecture Twenty-eight-B. I listened to it all the way from Earth."

"Please," said Cheng-tung. "The issue is important."

"The cetoids do pose an embarrassing problem," conceded Jevons. "Though I don't believe any scientist has ever objected to vivisection—even the use of close cousins like the apes—for human benefit."

"The cetoids aren't apes!" protested Hawthorne, his lips whitening. "They're more human than you are!"

"Wait a minute," said Dykstra. He moved from his vision of lightning, toward Hawthorne. His face had lost its glory. It was concerned. "I realize you have opinions about this, Nat. But after all, you have no more evidence—"

"I do!" gasped Hawthorne. "I've got it at last. I've been wondering all day how to tell you, but now I must."

What Oscar had shown him came out in words, between peals of thunder.

At the end, even the gale seemed to pause, and for a while only rain, and the *brroom-brroom* of waves far below, continued to speak. McClellan stared at his hands, which twisted a die between the fingers. Cheng-tung rubbed his chin and smiled with scant mirth. Jevons, however, became serenely resolute. Dykstra was harder to read, his face flickered from one expression to the next. Finally he got very busy lighting a new cigaret.

When the silence had become too much, Hawthorne said, "Well?" in a cracked tone.

"This does indeed put another complexion on the matter," said Cheng-tung.

"It isn't proof," snapped Dykstra. "Look at what bees and bower birds do on Earth."

"Hey," said McClellan. "Be careful, Wim, or you'll prove that we're just glorified ants ourselves."

"Exactly," said Hawthorne. "I'll take you out in a submarine tomorrow and show you, if Oscar himself won't guide us. Add this discovery to all the other hints we've had, and damn it, you can no longer deny that the cetoids are intelligent. They don't think precisly as we do, but they think at least as well."

"And could doubtless teach us a great deal," said Cheng-tung. "Consider how much your people and mine learned from each othcr: and they were of the same specics."

Jevons nodded. "I wish you had told me this earlier, Nat," he said. "Of course there would have been no argument."

"Oh, well," said McClellan, "guess I'll have to go back to blowing up squibs on the Fourth."

The rain, wind-flung, hissed against the wall. Lightning still flickered, blue-white, but the thunder wagon was rolling off. The sea ran with wild frosty fires.

Hawthorne looked at Dykstra. The Dutchman was tense as a wire. Hawthorne felt his own briefly relaxing sinews grow taut again.

"Well, Wim?" he said.

"Certainly, certainly!" said Dykstra. He had grown pale. The cigaret fell unnoticed from his lips. "I am still not absolutely convinced, but that may be only my own disappointment. The chance of genocide is too great to take."

"Good boy," smiled Jevons.

Dykstra smote a fist into his palm. "But my report," he said. "what shall I do with my report?"

So much pain was in his voice that Hawthorne felt shock, even though the ecologist had known this question must arise.

McClellan said, startled: "Well, it's still a nice piece of research, isn't it?"

Then Cheng-tung voiced the horror they all felt. "I am afraid we must suppress the report, Dr. Dykstra," he said. "Regrettably, our species cannot be trusted with the information."

Jevons bit his lip. "I hate to believe that," he said. "We wouldn't deliberately and cold-bloodedly exterminate a billion or more scntient beings for our own . . . convenience."

"We have done similar things often enough in the past," said Dykstra woodenly.

I've read enough history myself, Wim, to give a very partial roll call, thought Hawthorne. And he began to tick off on his fingers. *Troy. Jericho. Carthage. Jerusalem. The Albigensians. Buchenwald.*

That's enough for now, he thought, feeling a wish to vomit.

"But surely—" began Jevons. "By now, at least—"

"It is barely possible that humane considerations may stay Earth's hand for a decade or two," said Dykstra. "The rate at which brutality is increasing gives me little hope even of that, but let us assume so. However, a century? A millennium? How long can we live in our growing poverty with such a temptation? I do not think forever."

"If it came to a choice between taking over Venus and watching our civilization go under," said McClellan, "frankly, I myself would say too bad for Venus. I've got a wife and kids."

"Be glad, then, that the choice will not be so clear-cut in your lifetime," said Cheng-tung.

Jevons nodded. He had suddenly become an old man, whose work neared an end. "You have to destroy that report, Wim," he said. "Totally. None of us here can ever speak a word about it."

And now Hawthorne wanted to weep, but could not. There was a barrier in him, like fingers closing on his throat.

Dykstra drew a long breath. "Fortunately," he said, "I have been close-mouthed. No hint escaped me. I only trust the Company will not sack me for having been lazy and produced nothing all these months."

"I'll see to it that they don't, Wim," said Jevons. His tone was immensely gentle beneath the rain.

Dykstra's hands shook a little, but he tore the first sheet off his report and crumpled it in an ashtray and set fire to it.

Hawthorne flung out of the room.

VII

THE AIR WAS COOL outside, at least by contrast with daytime. The squall had passed and only a mild rain fell, sluicing over his bare skin. In the absence of the sun he could go about with no more than shorts and mask. That was a strangely light sensation, like being a boy again in a summer forest which men had since cut down. Rain washed on the decks and into the water, two distinct kinds of noise, marvelously clear.

The waves themselves still ran strong, swish and boom and a dark swirling. Through the air shone a very faint auroral trace, barely enough to tinge the sky with a haze of rose. But mostly, when Nat Hawthorne had left lighted windows behind him, the luminance came from the ocean, where combers glowed green along their backs and utter white when they foamed. Here and there a knife of blackness cut the water, as some quick animal surged.

Hawthorne went down past the machine gun to the trading pier. Heavy seas broke over it, reaching to his knees and spattering him with phosphor glow. He clung to the rail and peered into rain, hoping Oscar would come.

"The worst of it is," he said aloud, "they all mean so well."

A winged being passed overhead, only a shadow and whisper.

"The proverb is wrong," babbled Hawthorne. He gripped the rail, though he knew a certain hope that a wave would sweep him loose . . . and afterward the Venusians would retrieve his bones and take no payment.

"Who shall watch the watchmen? Simple. The watchmen themselves who are of no use anyway, if they aren't honorable. But what about the thing watched? It's on the enemy's side. Wim and Cap and Jimmy and Shorty—and I. We can keep a secret. But nature can't. How long before someone else repeats this work? We hope to expand the Station. There'll be more than one geophysicist here, and—and—Oscar! Oscar, where the hell are you, Oscar?"

The ocean gave him reply, but in no language he knew.

He shivered, teeth clapping in his jaws. There was no reason to hang around here. It was perfectly obvious what had to be done. The sight of Oscar's ugly, friendly face wouldn't necessarily make the job easier. It might even make it harder. Impossible, perhaps.

Oscar might make me sane, thought Hawthorne. Ghosts of Sinaic thunder walked in his skull. *I can't have that. Not yet. Lord God of Hosts, why must I be this fanatical? Why not register my protest when the issue arises, like any normal decent crusader, organize pressure groups, struggle by all the legal proper means. Or, if the secret lasts out my lifetime, why should I care what may happen afterward? I won't be aware of it.*

No. That isn't enough. I require certainty, not that justice will be done, for that is impossible but that injustice will not be done. For I am possessed.

No man, he thought in the wet blowing night, no man could foresee everything. But he could make estimates, and act on them. His brain was as clear as glass, and about as alive, when he contemplated purely empirical data.

If Venus Station stopped paying off, Venus would not be visited again. Not for a very long time, during which many things could happen . . . a Venusian race better able to defend itself, or even a human race that had learned self-control. Perhaps men would never return. Technological civilization might well crumble and not be rebuilt. Maybe that was best, each planet working out its

own lonely destiny. But all this was speculation. There were immediate facts at hand.

Item. If Venus Station was maintained, not to speak of its possible expansion, Dykstra's discovery was sure to be repeated. If one man had found the secret, once in a few years of curiosity, another man or two or three would hardly need more than a decade to grope their way to the same knowledge.

Item: Venus Station was at present economically dependent on the cooperation of the cetoids.

Item: If Venus Station suffered ruin due to the reported hostile action of the cetoids, the Company was unlikely to try rebuilding it.

Item: Even if the Company did make such an attempt, it would soon be abandoned again if the cetoids really did shun it.

Item: Venus would then be left alone.

Item: If you believed in God and sin and so forth which Hawthorne did not, you could argue that the real benefactor would be humankind, saved from the grisliest burden of deeds since a certain momentous day on Golgotha.

The worst of this for me, Hawthorne came to realize, *is that I don't care very much about humankind. It's Oscar I want to save. And how much hate for one race can hide under love for another?*

He felt dimly that there might be some way to flee nightmare. But the only path down which a man, flipperless and breathing oxygen, could escape, was back through the station.

He hurried along a quiet, brightly-lit corridor to a stairwell sloping toward the bowels of the station and down. No one else was about. He might have been the last life in a universe turned ashen.

But when he entered the stockroom, it was a blow that another human figure stood there. Ghosts, ghosts . . . what right had the ghost of a man not yet dead to walk at this moment?

The man turned about. It was Chris Diehl, the biochemist. "Why, hi, Nat," he said. "What are you doing at this hour?"

Hawthorne wet his lips. The Earthlike air seemed to wither him. "I need a tool," he said. "A drill, yes —a small electric drill."

"Help yourself," said Diehl.

Hawthorne lifted a drill off the rack. His hands began to shake so much that he dropped it. Diehl stared at him.

"What's wrong, Nat?" he asked softly. "You look like second-hand custard."

"I'm all right," whispered Hawthorne. "Quite all right."

Hawthorne picked up the drill and went out. The locked arsenal was low in the station hull. Hawthorne could feel Venus' ocean surge below the deckplates. That gave him the strength to drill the lock open and enter, to break the cases of explosive and lay a fuse. But he never remembered having set a time cap on the fuse. He only knew he had done so.

His next recollection was of standing in a boathouse, loading oceanographic depth bombs into one of the little submarines. Again, no one stirred. No one was there to question him. What had the brothers of Venus Station to fear?

Hawthorne slipped into the submarine and guided it out the sea gate. Minutes later he felt the shock of an explosion. It was not large, but it made so much noise in him that he was stunned and did not see Venus Station go to the bottom. Only afterward did he observe that the place was gone. The waters swirled wildfire above it, a few scraps of wreckage bobbing in sheeting spindrift.

He took a compass bearing and submerged. Before long, the coralite city glowed before him. For a long moment he looked at its spires and grottos and lovelinesses, until fear warned him that he might make himself incapable of doing what was necessary. So he dropped his bombs, hastily and felt his vessel shudder with their force, and saw the temple become a ruin.

And next he remembered surfacing. He went out on deck and his skin tasted rain. The cetoids were gathering. He could not see them, except in glimpses, a fluke or a back, phosphor streaming off into great waves, with once a face glimpsed just under the low rail, almost like a human baby's in that uncertain light.

He crouched by the machine gun, screaming, but they couldn't understand and anyway the wind made a rag of his voice. "I have to do this! I have no choice, don't you see? How else can I explain to you what my people are like when their greed dominates them? How else can I make you avoid them, which you've got to do if you want to live? Can you realize that? Can you? But no, you can't, you mustn't. You have to learn hate from us, since you've never learned it from each other—"

And he fired into the bewildered mass of them.

The machine gun raved for a long time, even after no more living Venusians were around. Hawthorne didn't stop shouting until he ran out of ammunition. Then he regained consciousness. His mind felt quiet and very clear, as if a fever had possessed him and departed. He rememberd summer mornings when he was a boy, and early sunlight slanting in his bedroom window and across his eyes. He re-entered the turret and radioed the spaceship with total rationality.

"Yes, Captain, it was the cetoids, beyond any possibility of doubt. I don't know how they did it. Maybe they disarmed some of our probe bombs, brought them back and exploded them. But anyhow the station has been destroyed. I got away in a submarine. I glimpsed two other men in an open boat, but before I could reach them the cetoids had attacked. They stove in the boat, and killed the men as I watched . . . God, no, I can't imagine why! Never mind why! Let's just get away from here!"

He heard the promise of rescue by ferry, set an automatic location signal, and lay down on the bunk. It was over now, he thought in a huge grateful weariness. No human would ever learn the truth. Given time, he himself might forget it.

The space vessel descended at dawn, when the sky was turning to mother-of-pearl. Hawthorne came out on deck. Some dozen Venusian corpses rolled alongside the hull. He didn't want to see them, but there they were, and suddenly he recognized Oscar.

Oscar gaped blindly into the sky. Small pincered crustaceans were eating him. His blood was green.

Oh, God, thought Hawthorne, *please exist. Please make a hell for me.*

E GUBLING DOW

by GORDON R. DICKSON

The silver egg could have come from the stars . . . or a Sputnik, or a flying saucer. They only knew that its dying occupant was strange beyond belief.

"LISTEN," SAID SONNY, snapping a glance at his father. "I heard something just now. Noise like a car coming up the road to the place, here."

"I don't hear nothing," said George Weaver. "No one coming calling at our farm at past midnight." He put his big, grey, wrinkled hand on the table. Not striking it, just laying it out. "Pass the spuds, girl."

"Here, dad."

From beside the stove, Sonny's wife Betty came across the room with her apron whispering and the large oval blue-rimmed bowl in her hand. She forked boiled potatoes onto the old man's plate.

"Shut up," said Sonny. "I tell you I heard something."

They stopped for a moment, Betty standing by George's chair, George staring at his son, unwillingly yet curiously silent. Outside the house, the plowed fields and the moonlit wood was silent. The chilly spring night was silent.

"Could've swore I heard something," said Sonny, reluctantly at last. He sat back in the chair at the kitchen table; and under the white wash of light from the bright bulb in the ceiling, motion came back to the three of them.

Betty took the potato dish back to the stove and set it down beside the burners. George split his potato with a fork. He looked at Sonny's thin face.

"That murder mystery movie tonight got your head full of notions," he said.

"Yes," said Sonny. "If it was up to you, we'd never go to town."

"It ain't going to town, I mind. It's staying up all night like this," said the old man. "Girl, where's the butter?"

"Right in the icebox behind you," said Sonny. "Come here and sit down, Betty. Let him get it his own self. You haven't ate a thing yourself, yet."

"I don't mind," said Betty. She had a voice as soft as the blue eyes in her small face. "I'll sit in a minute."

"No, go ahead and sit now," said George. "I guess my son told me my place here on the farm I've worked for forty years. Go ahead and sit down."

"I'll get everything on the table first," said Betty. She moved about the kitchen, bringing things to the square, linoleum-covered table top.

© 1959, by Gordon R. Dickson

"I guess I'll eat and go to bed—" the old man was beginning, when Sonny cut him off, excitedly.

"Listen! hear that?"

With the tall echo of his words still hanging in the air, the other two, old man and young woman, seemed to feel rather than hear something that had just ceased. It was like sensing that a sound had been, rather than that a sound was.

"What is it, Sonny?" Betty asked her husband. She stood by the stove, her apron caught up in the act of wiping her hands.

"I don't know," said Sonny, jumping suddenly to his feet. "But I'm sure as heck going to find out." He snatched up his jacket from the back of his chair and strode swiftly to the kitchen door.

"Wait!" cried Betty. "I'll go with you."

"Girl!" said the old man.

"Oh, just stay where you are, dad!" she flung over her shoulder at him. "I'll be back, I'll be back!"

Lifting a sweater from its hook near the kitchen door, she ran out after her husband, shutting the door behind her. On the steps she paused. Then she made out Sonny's dark shadowy form at the far edge of the back yard, looking over the duckpond into the blackness of the woods behind the farmhouse. Lightly, she ran to him.

"Sonny," she said, in a low voice, taking his arm. "What was it?"

"Don't know," he said, frowning at the woods. He turned his head to look down at her. "Something smashed out there." He gestured to the woods. "The old man giving you a specially hard time, tonight?"

"Oh, he's tired," she said.

"If you'd stand up to him, he wouldn't be ordering you around all the time like a servant."

She squeezed his arm. "I don't mind."

"Well, I mind," said Sonny. "You're my wife, not his."

"It's that that bothers him," she said. "With your stepmother gone, and him not able to work the way he used to, he feels like someone extra around the place."

"He don't have to," said Sonny.

"I know. Sonny—" she said, "what was it like—what you heard?"

"Like a car coming, a long way off," he said. "And then a smash. A real light smash, crackling, sort of—like an orange crate being splintered and busting wide open."

She looked past him, into the woods. "Out there?" she said.

"Sounded like it."

He started off suddenly, down the slope toward the duckpond. She came after him.

"Maybe you better go back to the house," he said.

"No," she answered. "I want to come."

"Stay close, then," he said.

He went on, his slim shoulders bobbing in the moonlight as he detoured around the duck pond. He looked thin and small, but quick and dangerous like a ferret. Betty followed, thinking how much littler—and yet, in other ways, how much bigger he was than the long, heavy-jointed man, his father.

They walked into the woods. The trees were big and had killed off all but a few straggly patches of underbrush between them. The moonlight came through their bare branches, filtering down in thin shafts.

"If something's here, it ought to show," she whispered at the back of his ear. The wood was only an acre or two deep—a patch rather than a real wood.

Sonny grunted. There was silence for a moment. Then he spoke again. "There!" he said. "Look!"

He stopped and Betty stopped, and Betty looked forward over his shoulder. In the little cleared spot between two big trees was something like a large, half-shattered silver egg. Its top half was still intact, but the bottom had broken and spread.

"What is it?" asked Betty.

But Sonny was already approaching the smashed thing. He came up and stood beside it. It was barely taller than his head—not more than six feet high as it stood—and maybe eight feet through the middle.

"Funny!" he said.

Betty had caught up with him by this time. "Is it some kind of plane?" she asked.

"Not likely," he said. Then he changed his mind. "Might be. They got new stuff coming out all the time nowadays." He frowned at it. "Sure looks flimsy, doesn't it?"

He reached out a hand to touch the cracked, silver surface before him. It bent at his touch. Through the whole thing ran a shiver and without warning a strange, deep voice spoke briefly to them from the thing's interior.

"What's that?" gasped Betty. Her eyes were big in the moonlight which in this little open space flooded down all around them. She and Sonny had both drawn back at the sound; and now they stood close together, staring.

"Leave me go," said Sonny. "I've got to look into this. Just you stay back a bit—"

Betty released the hands that had clutched at him all unwittingly. When he went forward, again, she ignored his advice and stayed close beside him. Gingerly, he touched the broken object once more.

Again, the voice spoke. It was as if the shattered thing responded instinctively to his touch.

He touched it once more. Clear and sharp, for the third time, the voice made sounds like recognizable words in the night.

"E Gubling Dow!"

"Don't, Sonny!" cried Betty. "Leave it alone! It might be something dangerous. A bomb or something.

"There's something in there," said Sonny, staring in fascination at the object.

"Maybe it's something foreign. Let's go call the sheriff," said Betty. "Please, Sonny!"

He shook her off. "Foreign or not," he said. "There's something in there. I want to know what it is."

"Don't you know better!" she cried in agony. "They've got bombs and terrible things nowadays.

It's not your business to look into things like this."

"Now you shut up," said Sonny. But he did not say it angrily. "This is my farm—"

"It is not! It's your dad's!"

"Mine as much as his. And I got a right to look in what comes onto it, if I want. Now you stay back."

"I won't," she said. "If you're going to do something crazy like that I'm going to be right with you."

"All right," Sonny said. "Just don't you get in the way."

He approached the object again; and, taking the two edges of a crack, forced them apart. The metal, if it was metal, of the shell tore slowly, like heavy cardboard, but without sound. When he had separated the two edges of the crack enough, he thrust his head and shoulders inside.

A deep "*E Gubling Dow*" sounded from the interior and after a second, Sonny's voice followed, sounding muffled and a little hollow.

"Something here, all right. Pull that right edge back, Betty, while I lift it out."

Betty hurried to obey. The thin bright metal felt cool and flimsy in her fingers.

Sonny backed out, holding something large and curved in his arms. When he got it out into the moonlight, they saw that it was a round thing, perhaps a little larger than a basketball, but flattened as if by its own weight, and with an odd crease diagonally across its top.

"Brace or something had it pinned in," said Sonny. "I—"

Abruptly, in the tricky moonlight, a dimple seemed to appear near the top of the thing. The dimple deepened, widened, and spoke suddenly, the same words they had heard before.

"*E Gubling Dow.*"

Betty gave a little throat-caught shriek, and backed off.

"It's alive!" she cried.

"Of course it's alive," said Sonny. The mouth contracted and all but disappeared. "Don't scare yourself, honey. Something like this can't hurt nobody. Here, feel it."

Betty backed away.

"Come on," urged Sonny. His hands, used to the animals of the farm, held it lightly and surely. "Nothing slimy or bad about it. It's light as a balloon, darn near."

"Put it down and we'll go call the sheriff," said Betty, tremulously.

"Feel it," commanded Sonny.

Reluctantly, Beaty approached and reached out shrinking fingertips. Her first touch on the creature could have been no more than the brush of a feather. When it neither moved nor spoke, she gained courage, and drew closer, running her fingers more certainly over its surface.

"It feels—funny," she said. "Sort of satiny-smooth, and warm."

"Here, hold it," said Sonny. "Nothing to it, hardly."

Hesitantly, she took it and exclaimed in surprise.

"It's like a bubble!" she cried. "Like a big, warm, bubble."

Sonny reached out and took the strange object back from her.

"We'll carry it up to the house," he said. "Then we can call the sheriff. There's something special about this." And he started off back toward the house.

"What do you suppose it is, Sonny?" asked Betty, following close behind him.

"Can't tell," said Sonny.

"Where do you suppose it came from?"

"Through the air, someplace, that's for sure," said Sonny. "That thing it was in wasn't built for moving along the ground."

"They do all sorts of secret things, nowadays," said Betty. "Maybe the army sent it out, or the air force, or something. Sonny—"

"What?"

"You don't suppose it might be from—someplace else? Like those flying saucers, things like that?"

Sonny grunted. For a minute he did not answer; and they walked along in silence.

"I was thinking about that," he said, finally.

"What?" asked Betty.

"I was thinking," he said. "I don't guess I'll call the Sheriff after all. I think maybe I'll call the FBI."

"The FBI."

"I guess so."

Betty looked at her husband with wide eyes.

"If this is something special," said Sonny. "The FBI would know better how to handle it. Besides, there might be something they wanted to keep secret."

"But—Betty stumbled. "You can't just *phone*."

"Why not?" he countered. "They're in the city phone book, just like everything else."

They had reached the edge of the wood and emerged into full moonlight again. Under its beams, the creature in Sonny's arms seemed to gleam and glow. The dimple mouth sprang suddenly into existence, widened and spoke.

"*E Gubling Dow.*"

They stopped at the sound of it, staring at each other.

"This's nothing for the Sheriff," said Sonny.

Betty looked from him to the creature, in which the mouth had all but vanished again. She followed Sonny back across the yard and up the back steps of the farm house.

"Open the door for me," ordered Sonny. She moved past him, pulled open the screen door, pushed open the back door, and stood holding both doors wide, looking into the kitchen where the old man still sat at table, a piece of cold roast pork on his fork. He put it down when he saw her and lifted his head.

"It's going on two o'clock in the morning," he said. "If you're done traipsing all over the woods —" he broke off suddenly as Sonny came in, carrying the creature. His creased face hardened in surprise. "What's that?"

"Something," said Sonny, briefly. He carried it across to one of the kitchen chairs and set it down on the chair's seat. It flattened a little and lay still without rolling. He went on into the living room and George and Betty could hear him on the

phone, asking the local operator for the city number of the FBI.

George stared at the creature on the chair. Under the bright illumination of the electric light in the kitchen, its rounding shape ran with shifting colors. It lay still. Only the creased spot across its top was dark and colorless.

"Girl!" said the old man, finding his voice, finally. "What is that?"

"I don't know, Dad," she said. She stood facing him, feeling defensive, the edge of the sink pressing into the small of her back. "It was in something that came down and crashed back in our woods."

"What's it doing in my house?"

"Sonny brought it," she said.

"I know he brought it. I want to know what it is, and what it's doing here. And what's that Sonny's calling for on the phone?"

"The FBI."

"The FBI?" George stared at her. "Has he gone crazy? Has he gone clear out of his head?" The old man pushed himself suddenly back in his chair and stood up. With long, heavy strides, he crossed to the chair in which the creature lay; and reached out a knobby forefinger toward it.

Before he could touch it, the dimple appeared and widened. The creature spoke.

"E Gubling Dow."

George jerked his finger back as if it had been bitten. He backed away from the chair, his face angry and scared.

"It's alive!" he said.

"Yes, dad," began Betty. "It spoke like that before."

"It's *alive!*" repeated the old man, hoarsely.

"Dad—"

"What kind of thing is it?"

Betty opened her mouth; but she could think of nothing to say. At that moment, however, Sonny came back from the living room.

"They said they'd send someone out," he said. He grinned, briefly. "Man on the phone sounded like he thought I was drunk, at first."

"Richard!" said George. "Richard! What have you brought into this house?"

At the unusual use of his given name, Sonny turned slowly. For the first time, he noticed the wild stare in the older man's eyes.

"What's wrong with you?" he asked. "It's nothing, Dad. Just something from a ship of some kind that crashed out into the woods."

"It ain't natural," said his father. "Whatever it is, it ain't natural, nor fit, nor holy. Look at it! And it's alive!"

"Well, why not?" demanded Sonny. "Why shouldn't there be something like that and alive? Just because it don't look—"

"Where did it come from?"

"Some sort of flying ship from someplace smashed up back in the woods."

"It's a devil creature. Something like that was never meant to exist on the good earth."

Sonny stared at his father. "Now, what're you getting all worked up for?" he said, gently. "It don't have to be so terrible just because it's different."

"I tell you it ain't right! Things like that just ain't right!" cried George. He stared frantically from Sonny to Betty. "Girl, you shouldn't have let him do it. You shouldn't 'a let him bring it home."

"Dad—" began Betty.

Sonny went past her and up to his father and took him by the arms.

"Here, you sit down now," he said, pushing the old man easily into a chair. "There's no sense you getting all worked up like that. It's just some strange kind of animal, that's all."

"No, it ain't!" shouted the old man. "It ain't even an animal. It's something different."

"And what if it is?" answered Sonny. "Maybe that was what they call a saucer it was in, and it's from Mars or the moon or something. That don't make it something ungodly. Besides, the man is coming to take it anyhow."

"You shouldn't ought to let it live," said George in a low, dead voice, staring across the room at it.

"Dad—" said Betty, coming across the room to him. She put a hand on his shoulder and rubbed it soothingly back and forth. "It can't hurt anyone. All it can do is talk a little. And I think it's asking for help. See—" she pointed to the dark crease across it. "I think it's hurt."

"That's where that brace pinched it," said Sonny. He walked over and examined the crease. "I don't suppose there's anything we can do."

"Kill it," said George.

"Now you listen to me!" flashed Sonny, raising his head and looking across at his father. "We aren't going to touch this thing. It ain't up to us to touch it. And anyway it's done us no harm and I don't believe in lifting any hand against any living thing until it does!"

"It ain't right," said the old man, stubbornly.

"It ain't right—it ain't right," echoed Sonny, exasperated. "That all you can say? What's not right about it?"

"What ain't right about it?" The old man straightened up, his eyes wide and angry, his face flushed. "I'll tell you what, boy! This world's been going to hell for some time now. Everybody playing hob with things that ought to be left be. Wars and destruction. Plague and pestilence. They got to monkey with the weather.

"They got to make atomic bombs which ain't no more nor less than letting loose hellfire on Earth. Every day they find something new to cut a man up for, or pump him full of serum for, or take him to court for. And that there—" he pointed a shaking finger at the round creature— "that's the end of it all. Something that was never meant to be on this earth and there it is."

Sonny stared at his father. "This's not like you," he said, slowly.

"Not like me?" cried George.

"This roaring around about science and progress and all. I notice you ain't kicking the tractor out of the barn for no horses!"

The old man opened his mouth, then abruptly clamped it shut again and stood glaring at his son. Sonny looked at him a moment, then went on.

"Never heard you say nothing against hybrid corn. Or Black Angus cattle. How come you're so

not under the collar about this?" and he jerked a thumb at the creature.

"They're different!" cried George. "They're natural animals. This—talks."

"Just makes a noise, is all."

"Noise, my foot!" said George. "That's talk, as clear as a man makes. That thing can talk. And it can listen. It's laying over there listening to every word we say right now."

Sonny half-turned to look at the creature, his eyes narrowing.

"You said it come in a ship, didn't you?" demanded the old man. "They don't put animals in to fly ships."

"The Russians sent a dog up, didn't they? Newspaper said we sent some monkeys up in rockets. The army or the navy or something did."

"Dogs and monkeys!" the old man's scorn was crushing. "That ain't no monkey, lying there watching us like that, speaking words like a human."

"Watching!" said Sonny. "It's got no eyes. But all right, supposing it is. Supposing it's smart as a man. Supposing it come all the way from some star we never even heard of. What about it?"

"What about it? I'll tell you what about it when you answer me one question," said George. "What's it come *for*? What's it come all the way to the Earth, here, to the U.S.A., to our farm and our woods and our house for?"

Sonny frowned. In the moment's silence, almost as if it was in answer to the old man's question, the dimple formed once more on the creature's smooth surface; and it spoke again.

"*E Gubling—Dow,*" it said.

There was the slightest of pauses between the second and the last word, this time. It impressed itself on the three listeners with the particular sharpness of something at once opposite and ominous. In the pause following, Betty spoke tremblingly.

"Sonny," she said. "Sonny—I think it's getting worse."

"Worse?" echoed Sonny. He took a step over to the creature and looked down at it. "What d'you mean?"

Betty's finger indicated the crease on the creature's top, without touching it.

"See—it's getting darker around there," she said. "And it sounded kind of—well, weak."

Sonny examined it. After a moment, he raised an angry face in the direction of his father.

"Now you see!" he said. "You with all your yelling about what a terrible thing it is. It hurt itself in that crash. Maybe it's hurt bad. You sitting there worrying about it, when it's not only harmless but prob'ly dying."

"It won't die," said the old man, raising his head. "Critters of that sort don't die."

"Lot you know about it," grumbled Sonny, bending over the creature. "Betty, there ought to be something we could do for it."

"I don't know, Sonny," said Betty, standing gazing at it. "I don't know what anyone could do for something like that."

"That brace must have pinched it bad inside, maybe it broke something. Maybe—" he broke off, suddenly aware of his father close behind him, peering over his shoulder. He turned. The old man was staring in fascination at the creature.

"It can't die," said the old man again. But there was doubt in his voice for the first time.

"Why can't it?" demanded Sonny sharply.

The old man shook his head, but said nothing. He continued to gaze at the creature, which, as if it was aware of their concentrated attention upon it, opened its dimple of a mouth once more.

"*E . . . Gubling . . . Dow,*" it said.

There was no doubt that the pauses between the words—if they were words—were no longer than they had been before. Though nothing else had changed, neither the tone nor the accent with which the words were spoken, the words came slowly, as if they were being pushed out by unusual effort.

"How soon will the man be here?" asked Betty.

"He said in an hour or two."

"Be sun-up in an hour or two," said the old man. "After three now. No sort of hours to stay up to." His voice was mechanical and absent. He remained, staring at the creature.

Sonny and Betty paid no attention.

"Do you think they can do something for it when they come?" Betty said.

"Don't know," frowned Sonny. "Take it in to the hospital, I guess. Take an x-ray there and see what's wrong. I don't know."

"It'd be too bad if it—didn't last," said Betty.

"Yeah," said Sonny.

There was a moment's silence in the white-lit kitchen.

"You don't suppose—" said Betty. "You don't suppose it's something important it's trying to tell us?" She looked up into Sonny's face as if for reassurance.

Sonny shook his head

"No telling," he said.

"What I say is," broke in George suddenly. "It must've come for some reason—" he turned to his son. "How far off are them stars?"

"Hundreds of millions of miles," replied Sonny, without turning his head.

Air hissed scornfully in between the old man's teeth. "You're crazy boy," he said. "It can't be nothing like that."

"Look in the almanac if you don't believe me," said Sonny.

"Huh!" said George; but he turned and went across to the kitchen shelf where the current issue of the almanac stood beside Betty's cookbooks.

"I just wish we could do something for it," said Betty.

"I guess we could put him on a pillow or something," said Sonny.

Betty turned and went out of the room. Behind Sonny, the old man's feet shuffled across the kitchen floor.

"I can't find it in here, Sonny," he said, pushing the almanac into his son's hands. "Where do you find figures like that?"

Sonny took it, ran through the index and turned to the almanac's interior.

"Here you are," he said. "The Planets and the Solar System. Name of planet—Mercury— ap-

proximate distance from Earth in millions of miles —maximum one thirty-six.' That's a hundred and thirty-six million miles. Minimum, fifty—' That's fifty million and so on. And the planets ain't stars. Stars are much further off. Read it for yourself, there. Maybe it came from a planet, maybe a star."

He handed the book back to the old man, who took it numbly and stared at the open page.

"That can't be right," he said. "That just can't be right. Couldn't anything come that far. Why, do you know how far a million miles is, Sonny?"

"If they figure we can do it one of these days, no reason this couldn't have," said Sonny.

Betty came back with the pillow.

"Lift it real gently, Sonny," she said. Sonny lifted. She slid the pillow underneath the creature. It shivered, but said nothing.

"All that way—" the old man was mumbling. "What for?"

"Maybe," said Betty, hesitantly, "it came to tell us something."

"Tell us what?" demanded George, turning to her."

"I don't know. But the way it says E Gub—whatever it is—over and over again—"

"Sonny," George turned to his son, "do you guess that's it?"

"Don't know," said Sonny, gazing at the now quiet creature.

"*E—*" it said. "*Gubling—Dow.*"

"I'm going to call that FBI office again," said Sonny. "Maybe I could meet them half-way or some such thing."

He went into the living room; and they heard him speaking to the operator. George turned to Betty.

"Girl—" he said, in a low voice. "Girl, I'm not as young as I used to be. Maybe I'm old fashioned, but it's hard for me—all these new things. And I don't know about this. I just don't know."

She came over to him and took his hand, sympathetically.

"You don't like it either," he said, looking up at her. "I know you don't like it, either."

She stroked his shoulder, reassuringly.

"Hush, dad," she said. But her voice trembled a little. "Hush. I was scared at first, too. But now I'm just sorry for it, being hurt and all."

"What's it trying to say to us?" said the old man. "I can't talk to *him*. He don't listen to me any more. But you know how I feel, girl. I worked for my uncle thirty years before I got this place. I tried to build it into something permanent over forty years here. And now that I got it, the world seems to be going to pieces all around me. You understand me, girl. I don't mean to be ornery and cranky all the time. I just don't feel right with things any more."

"Hush, dad," she said. "We know."

"You do," he answered. "But does *he*? He's all one piece, that boy. All one tight little package. Can't nobody tell what he thinks or feels or sees. Most of the time I think he don't care. I care. You care." He looked up at the girl suddenly with a strange expression on his lined face. "I know and I bet he don't even. You're expecting, ain't you?"

"Shhh!" said the girl. But this time there was an urgency to her hushing. "I don't know—I mean, I'm not sure. I want to see the doctor first before I say anyting. I was going today in town, but I didn't get the chance."

"You see?" mumbled George. "You and a child in you. And me—"

"*E. . . .*" said the creature, slowly and heavily, "*Gubling . . . Doooow.*"

The last word drew out like a disk on a record player slowing down. They both looked over at the creature where it lay still.

"And it," said George.

Sonny came back into the kitchen, walking fast, as he always did, on his toes.

"Man's already left," he announced. "How is he?"

He bent over the creature. He shook his head. The area around the crease had darkened and enlarged and the colors that played over the surface of the sphere seemed to have slowed.

"Betty," he said, straightening up. "Let's have some coffee. That man ought to be here in an hour. City's only forty miles away."

"If he doesn't get lost," put in George.

Sonny looked at his father. "He won't," he said, shortly.

Betty went to the stove and picked up the coffee pot. The coffee in it was old. She poured it out and put fresh water on. Then she came back and sat down at the table.

They sat now, all three of them, for Sonny had taken a seat at the table, too; and his father was seated across from him. Sonny looked up at the old man.

"You tired, Dad?" he said. "No sense you're staying up unless you want to."

"I'm waiting," said George.

A silence fell between them. After a while, the coffee pot began to sing above the burner and Betty got up to turn the current off. Still none of them said anything. Betty went to the cupboard and came out with fresh cups. She placed one before each of the men and filled it up. Then she began, mechanically, to clear the table.

"Leave that go until morning, why don't you?" said Sonny, looking up at her.

"I hate to get up to a dirty kitchen," she said. "It's no trouble—now."

He turned his gaze away from her, and back to the creature. Both men sat drinking their coffee and watching it. Their faces were still above the table, like the busts of old Roman Senators. Sonny's narrow, smallboned features were straining a little forward—like action suspended—with an almost predatory brightness as he watched the creature. His father's face was stiller, more settled and heavy, the wrinkled skin looking thick, like old leather weathered by time, the immobility of age holding it with a solid motionlessness. The electric clock above the sink moved noiselessly, its little purring of gears lost in the watermuted clatter of the dishes, as Betty washed up.

Three times, as the hour went by, the creature cleared its throat as if to speak, but no full words came out.

"It's going," said the old man, suddenly.

This abrupt speaking of what was in all their minds, made the other two look quickly over at him.

"Maybe not," said Sonny, sharply.

The old man raised his head and looked Sonny squarely in the eye.

"Some things you can tell me, boy," he said. "But not that. I know when something's birthing, and when it's dying."

Sonny opened his mouth as if to retort, closed it again, then opened it once more.

"You'd be glad to see that, wouldn't you?" he asked.

The old man rubbed his hands together.

"Don't know," he said. "Guess we're better off without it."

"Ever figure it might be like a man, someplace else?" said Sonny. "A man with his insides smashed, dying in some place strange with things like that around him, just watching and not knowing what to do?"

The old man sighed and turned his head away. On the window beside him the blind was pulled. He reached out with one long arm and raised it part way.

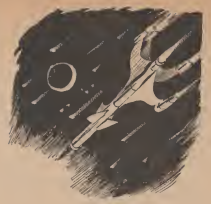
"Coming on to dawn," he said.

The first pale, grayish-white light of morning was flooding across the fields. It cast its illumination in through the window, making the electric light in the ceiling suddenly yellow and garish.

Abruptly, the creature shivered and rocked a little on its pillow. The dimple mouth fluttered open and shut, open and shut, and a sudden riot of wild colors, unlike anything they had seen before, flamed wildly over its surface.

"E GUBLING DOW!" it said; and then, very fast, three times, so that the sounds were all run together. *"E Gubling Dow! E Gubling Dow! E Gubling Dow!"*

The dimple sagged half open; and it went silent.



The colors faded like a momentary flush, faded into gray and from there to a sickly white, like a dead fish, cast up on a shoreline, bleaching in the sun. The old man sighed heavily, and the ghost of an echo came from Betty. Sonny cursed suddenly, in a low, bitterly furious voice; and, getting up, stalked across the room and out the back door. The door slammed behind him.

The old man and the girl looked at each other.

"What ails the boy?" cried George.

"I don't know!" said Betty. She hurried across to the door, the old man up and lumbering behind her. She pulled it open and they stepped out onto the back stoop. Three steps down, Sonny stood below them, his back to them, his fists clenched at his side, staring into the rising sun. At the sound of the opening door, he whirled to face them.

"Sonny!" cried Betty. "Sonny, what is it?"

He glared at them, half-raising his fists, in a furious, helpless gesture.

"You—" he shouted. "It don't mean nothing to you! All you want is your farms or your babies. You don't know what goes on in the inside of a live and living man!"

Giant Size SATELLITE—*Presents*

NEXT MONTH'S HEADLINER

THE STRANGE BIRTH

A Magnificent Short Science Fiction Novel

by PHILIP JOSE FARMER

The short novel which we're running complete in the next issue is the kind of story which an editor—if he is fortunate—may find on his desk once or twice in five or six years. Not only is STRANGE BIRTH a completely *different* science fiction story; it is outstandingly brilliant and has for its theme an other-world biological concept so daring in its by-passing of the mundane, the taken-for-granted that it may well become the most widely discussed science fiction yarn of the decade. If you have a pulse-stirring preference for the daringly imaginative and magnificently controversial in science fiction—and what SF reader has not—we earnestly urge you not to miss this one.

STANLEY G. WEINBAUM: Dawn of Fame

Twenty years ago Stanley Weinbaum added a new dimension to science fiction, particularly in the realm of the interplanetary adventure story. His fame, which was phenomenal, was also well-deserved, and it has been sustained by reader interest and enthusiasm across the years.

by SAM MOSKOWITZ

In 1934 THE GREAT DEPRESSION had produced a change in the reading habits of most Americans. Even though a great many men and women may have desired the temporary escape which science fiction provided, they frequently could not afford to purchase more than one or two monthly magazines.

In such an atmosphere, publishers of the three surviving science fiction magazines competed desperately for a diminishing pool of readers. Hugo Gernsback's WONDER STORIES gave preference to stories with new ideas, and unusual approaches to the worlds of tomorrow. In this, it was joined in grim competition with ASTOUNDING STORIES. This magazine, after a nine-month hiatus in 1933, had been purchased by Street and Smith, and it also featured new and startling ideas, labeling its most unorthodox stories, "Thought variants."

Though harried by financial difficulties, Hugo Gernsback humored his teen-age editor, Charles D. Hornig and took time out to read a short story which had just come in through the mail. Publisher and editor, displaying remarkable restraint along with their mutual enthusiasm, wrote in the blurb for *A Martian Odyssey* by unknown Stanley G. Weinbaum in the July, 1934 issue of WONDER STORIES: "Our present author . . . has written a science fiction tale so new, so breezy, that it stands out head and shoulders over similar interplanetarian stories."

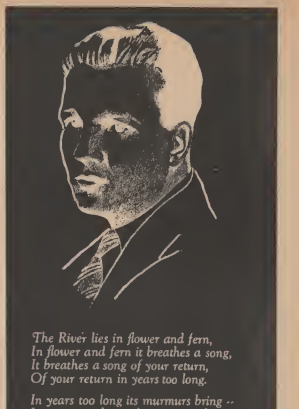
What followed is history. Readers were unreserved in their enthusiasm. The torrent of praise reached such proportions that Hornig, in reply to one reader's exceptionally discerning letter revealed: "Weinbaum's story has already received more praise than any story in the history of our publication."

This statement was no small thing, for even in 1934, WONDER STORIES had a star-studded five-year history which included outstanding tales by John Taine, Jack Williamson, Clifford D. Simak, David H. Keller, M.D., Ray Cummings, John W. Campbell, Jr., Stanton A. Coblentz, Clark Ashton Smith, Edmond Hamilton, Robert Arthur, H. P. Lovecraft (revising the work of Hazel Heald) and dozens of other names which retain much of their magic, even across the years.

Told in one of the most difficult of narrative techniques, that of the "flashback," the adroitness of handling in *A Martian Odyssey* was in all respects professional. The style was light and jaunty, without once becoming farcical and the characterization brilliantly conceived throughout. A cast of alien creatures that would have seemed bizarre for *The Wizard of Oz*, was somehow brought into dramatic conflict on the red sands of Mars in a wholly believable manner by the stylistic magic of this new author.

It was Weinbaum's creative brilliance in making strange creatures seem as real as the characters in *David Copperfield* that impressed readers the most. "Twe-er-r-rl," the intelligent Martian, an ostrich-like alien with useful manipular appendages—obviously heir of an advanced technology—is certainly one of the truly great characters in science fiction.

The author placed great emphasis on the possibility that so alien a being would think *differently* from a human being and therefore perform actions which would seem paradoxical or completely senseless to us. As presented and developed in *A Martian Odyssey*, this hitherto novel departure gave a new dimension to the interplanetary "Strange encounter" tale.



"Twe-er-r-rl" was not the only creature to whom difficult-to-understand psychology was applicable. In *A Martian Odyssey* there was also the silicon monster, who lived on sand, and burped bricks as a by-product, using the bricks to build an endless series of pyramids; round, four-legged creatures, with a pattern of eyes around their circumference, who spent their entire lives wheeling rubbish to be crushed by a giant wheel which occasionally turned traitor and claimed one of them instead; and, finally, a tentacled plant which lured its prey by hypnotically conjuring up wish-fulfillment images.

How thousands of readers felt about Stanley G. Weinbaum can best be summed up by quoting H. P. Lovecraft, even then recognized as one of the great masters of fantasy. "I saw with pleasure that someone had at last escaped the sickening hackneyedness in which 99.99% of all pulp interplanetary stuff is engulfed. Here, I rejoiced, was somebody who could think of another planet in

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terms of something besides anthropomorphic kings and beautiful princesses and battles of space ships and ray-guns and attacks from the hairy sub-men of the 'dark side' or 'polar cap' region, etc. etc. Somehow he had the imagination to envisage wholly alien situations and psychologics and entities, to devise consistent events from wholly alien motives and to refrain from the cheap dramatics in which almost all adventure-pulpists wallow. Now and then a touch of the *seemingly* trite would appear—but before long it would be obvious that the author had introduced it merely to satirize it. The light touch did not detract from the interest of the tales—and genuine suspense was secured without the catchpenny tricks of the majority. The tales of Mars, I think, were Weinbaum's best—those in which that curiously sympathetic being 'Twell' figure."

Too frequently, authors who cause a sensation with a single story are characterized as having come "out of nowhere." Weinbaum's ability to juggle the entire pantheon of standard science fiction gimmicks and come up with a new angle was not merely a matter of talent. It was grounded in high intelligence, an excellent scientific background and, most important of all, a thorough knowledge of the field.

Weinbaum had read science fiction since the first issue of AMAZING STORIES appeared on the stands in 1926. Previous to that he had devoured Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, A. Conan Doyle and Edgar Rice Burroughs, as well as many of the great Utopian writers.

A graduate chemical engineer, Stanley G. Weinbaum left that field in his early twenties, to try his hand at fiction. His first successful sale was a romantic, popular-type, sophisticated novel, *The Lady Dances*, which was syndicated by King Features in the early 1930's under the pen name of Marge Stanley, a combination of his wife's name and his own because he felt that a woman's name would be more acceptable as a byline on that kind of story.

Several other experimental novels were written during this period, including two that *were* science fiction; *The Mad Brain* and *The New Adam*. He also turned out an operetta, *Omar, the Tent Maker*, with the music written by his sister, Helen Weinbaum Kasson, a short story, *Real and Imaginary*, and a short-short titled *Graph*. None of these were ever submitted to a fantasy periodical during his lifetime. The operetta has never been published or produced. A sheaf of poetry must be in existence. The frequent introduction of brief, poetic passages in almost all of his novels suggests that the urge to write poetry must have been with him all his life.

Weinbaum must have turned to writing because he was a creative artist with a strong urge to write, for certainly, as a means of earning a livelihood during the depression, science fiction was not rewarding. He was 32 years old when *A Martian Odyssey* appeared in WONDER STORIES and the sum he received for the story, at the prevailing rates, could scarcely have exceeded $55.

Over at Street and Smith, Desmond Hall, as assistant to F. Orlin Tremaine, read the tale and was greatly impressed. He prevailed upon Julius Schwartz, then the only literary agent specializing solely in science fiction, to see what he could do about getting some Weinbaum material for ASTOUNDING STORIES. Schwartz was also editor of FANTASY MAGAZINE, a SF fan publication of exceptional distinction, as well as a partner in the *Solar Sales Service* with his close friend, Mort Weisinger. He had entry to all editorial offices. The problem now was how to secure Weinbaum's address.

"Everyone believes that Weinbaum is a pen name for a well-known author," he tossed at Charles D. Hornig, editor of WONDER STORIES.

"You mean, Ralph Milne Farley?" Hornig queried, after checking his files and noting that both Weinbaum and Farley lived in Milwaukee. His expression was noncommittal.

"What address did Farley use?" Schwartz asked, hoping that Hornig would be reasonably cooperative.

Hornig mentioned an Oakland Avenue address.

That was all Schwartz needed to know. He wrote Weinbaum and offered to agent his work. Weinbaum agreed and sent him a new short story, *The Circle of Zero*. It was turned down by the entire field, but an agent-author relationship was formed that was to endure long after Weinbaum's death and become a major factor in the perpetuation of his fame.

Anxious to capitalize upon the popularity of *A Martian Odyssey*, Charles D. Hornig urged Weinbaum to write a sequel. Weinbaum agreed and then played a strangely acceptable trick upon his readers.

An earlier draft of *A Martian Odyssey* had been titled *Valley of Dreams*. Weinbaum found that with a few additions and a little rewriting, it would serve magnificently as a sequel. He made the changes and sent it to WONDER STORIES. The story appeared in the November, 1934 issue of that magazine and if the readers suspected they were being entertained by the same story twice, you couldn't tell it from their letters!

Despite the intervention of the intrepid Julius Schwartz, WONDER STORIES might have kept Weinbaum on an exclusive basis a while longer had it not been for an over-exacting editorial policy. Weinbaum had submitted *Flight on Titan*, an adroitly written novelette, speckled with such strange life-forms as "knife kites," "ice ants," "whiplash trees" and "threadworms." It was not up to the level of the *Odyssey* stories, but was considerably superior to the general level of fiction Hornig was running at the time.

Nevertheless, the story was rejected because it did not contain a "new" idea and Schwartz, toting it like a football around the end, triumphed with a touchdown at ASTOUNDING STORIES. The story was instantly accepted.

Parasite Planet, which appeared in ASTOUNDING STORIES for March, 1935, the month after *Flight on Titan*, was the first of a trilogy featuring Ham Hammond and Patricia Burlingame. Though

this story was merely a light romantic travelogue, the slick magazine handling of the excursion across Venus with its Jack Ketch Trees which whirled lassos to catch their food; doughpots, mindless omnivorous masses of animate cells and the cyclops-like, semi-intelligent *triops noctivans*, charmed the readers with a spell reminiscent of *Martian Odyssey*.

In a sense, all of Weinbaum's stories were alien-world travel tales. The plot in each of them was a perilous quest. Beginning with his tales in ASTOUNDING STORIES, Weinbaum introduced a maturely-shaded boy-meets-girl element, something brand new for the science fiction of 1935, and he handled it as well as the best of the women's-magazine specialists. The wonderful, outré creatures he invented were frosting on the cake, comprising an entirely irresistible formula.

To all this Weinbaum now added a fascinating dash of philosophy with *The Lotus Eaters*, a novelette appearing in the April, 1935 ASTOUNDING STORIES and unquestionably one of his most brilliant masterpieces.

On the dark side of Venus, Ham and Pat meet a strange cavern-dwelling creature, actually a warm-blooded plant; looking like nothing so much as an inverted bushel basket, whom they dub "Oscar." Almost intellectually omnipotent, Oscar is able to arrive at the most astonishingly accurate conclusions about his world and the universe by extrapolating from the elementary exchanges of information. Despite his intelligence, Oscar has no philosophical objection to being eaten by the malevolent trioptes, predatory marauders of his world.

The entire story is nothing more than a series of questions and answers between the lead characters and Oscar, yet the reader becomes so absorbed that he might very easily imagine himself to be under the influence of the narcotic spores which are responsible for the Venusian's pontifical inertia.

Economic considerations as well as loyalty to the magazine which had published his first important science fiction story required that Weinbaum continue to consider WONDER STORIES as a market, despite its low word-rates. Realizing that the magazine was reluctant to publish stories that did not feature a new concept, he gave them what they wanted, selling in a single month, December, 1934, three short stories, *Pygmalion's Spectacles*, *The Worlds of If* and *The Ideal*. The first, appearing in the June, 1935 WONDER STORIES, centers about the invention of a new type of motion picture, where the viewer actually thinks he is participating in the action.

The motion picture involves a delightful boy-meets-girl romance, ending when the viewer comes awake from the hypnotic effect of the film, to learn that he has participated in a fantasy. All is happily resolved when he finds that the feminine lead was played by the inventor's daughter and romance is still possible.

The Worlds of If was the first of a series of three stories involving Professor Van Manderpootz, an erratic bearded scientist and young Dixon Wells, who is always late and always sorry. The plot revolves around a machine that will show the viewer what would have happened *if*—he had married a woman other than his wife; not gone to college; flunked his final exams or taken that other job. The humor is broad and the plotting a bit too synoptic to be effective.

The second story in the series, *The Ideal*, has for its theme the building of a machine which will reveal a man's mental and emotional orientation to reality through a systematic exploration of his subconscious motives.

The final story, *The Point of View*, is based on the imaginative assumption that, through the use of an even more remarkable machine—an "attitudinizer" one can see the world through the minds of others. The three stories are almost identical, varied only by the nature of the invention itself.

Despite their slightness, the van Manderpootz series are important because fascinating philosophical speculations accompany each mechanical gimmick description. Enlivened by humor and carried easily along by a highly polished style, Weinbaum's artistry now effectively disguised the fact that a philosopher was at work.

Understandably gaining confidence with success, Weinbaum embarked on a more ambitious writing program. He began work on a masterful short novel, the 25,000 word *Dawn of Flame*, featuring a woman of extraordinary beauty, Black Margot, and stressing human characterization and emotional conflict. A disappointment awaited him, however. The complete novel went the rounds of the magazines and was rejected as not being scientific or fantastic enough.

He altered the formula slightly, still featuring Black Margot, but sacrificing some of the literary quality for the sake of action and adventure. The new and much longer version—it ran to 65,000 words—was called *The Black Flame*.

With its traditional hero from the present awakening in the future to find himself in a divided world, a beautiful princess and a strange contrast of advanced science and medieval battle; fast pace and color, it should have been the answer to a pulp editor's dream. The novel was rejected for the second time.

In his home city Weinbaum was invited to join a group of fiction writers who called themselves The Milwaukee Fictioneers. Members of the circle included Ralph Milne Farley, who had earned a considerable reputation as creator of *The Radio Series* and other science fiction novels for ARGOSY; Raymond A. Palmer, the future editor of AMAZING STORIES; Arthur R. Tofte, an occasional contributor to the science fiction magazines and Lawrence A. Keating, a popular western story writer of the thirties. With his ready, unaffected wit and his interest in people and the world, Stanley Grauman Weinbaum quickly won the sincere friendship of the entire group.

Within a few months, Ralph Milne Farley—actually the pen name of Roger Sherman Hoar, a former Wisconsin Senator—who was doing a series of detective stories for TRUE GANG LIFE, suggested a collaboration. Weinbaum wrote with Far-

ley, *Yellow Slaves*, which appeared in TRUE GANG LIFE, for February, 1936.

This was the beginning of several other Weinbaum-Farley collaborations, including *Smothered Seas*, which appeared in ASTOUNDING STORIES for January, 1936. It deals with the appearance of a strange algae which forms a scum over the surface of the seas of the world and then covers the continents, impeding transportation. It is a pleasant but undistinguished story.

The collaborative method followed by Weinbaum and Farley was puzzling. Weinbaum would complete the entire first draft, and Farley would fill in the details and do the final polishing job. This seems strange, in view of the fact that Weinbaum was a master stylist, capable of writing the most finished prose.

The rejection of *Flame* now convinced Weinbaum, that he would either have to write formula material for the pulps, *a formula of his own invention*, or go unpublished. Precious months had gone by in which he had written stories which satisfied him artistically, but produced no income. The pay records of his agent, Julius Schwartz, show that Weinbaum derived not a penny from writing science fiction from the end of December, 1934, until June 15, 1935 when *The Planet of Doubt* brought a check for $110 from Tremaine's ASTOUNDING STORIES.

As the final story of the Ham and Pat series, *The Planet of Doubt* suffers by comparison with *The Lotus Eaters*. It is evident at this point that Weinbaum was planet-hopping for immediate remuneration and not for the satisfaction of using his talent to its utmost. But by the time this story appeared in the October, 1935 issue of ASTOUNDING, Weinbaum could do no wrong, and this amusing tale of the animated linked sausages of Uranus was taken in stride by the readers.

It has been claimed that the pen name John Jessel, used by Weinbaum for his story *The Adaptive Ultimate*, was adopted because he feared that too many stories bearing his own name were appearing in ASTOUNDING STORIES and that an increase in their number would not be wise.

The records of checks received at the time from his agent does not bear this out. Weinbaum had made no sales to ASTOUNDING for over six months. While Weinbaum may have *thought* that recent rejections were the result of too many appearances in ASTOUNDING, it seems far more likely that he had been "typed" and that Tremaine believed that the readers would look with disfavor upon any departure from his original narrative technique.

Strengthening this possibility is the experience of John W. Campbell, Jr. who gained fame as a super-science writer in the Edward E. Smith tradition, with novels like *The Black Star Passes, Islands in Space* and *The Mightiest Machine*, and found it necessary to switch to the pen name of Don A. Stuart for his mood stories, *Twilight* and *Night*, so as not to disorient his readers.

John Jessel was the name of Weinbaum's grandfather and the first story submitted to ASTOUNDING under that name, *The Adaptive Ultimate*, was a complete departure from the type of science fiction which established Weinbaum as an outstanding writer in the genre.

Whereas the Martian and Venus stories had been almost plotless travelogues, made narratively diversified by ingenious inventiveness and brilliance of style, *The Adaptive Ultimate* was the most carefully plotted of all of Weinbaum's magazine stories. With possible slight overtones derived from David H. Keller's poignant *Life Everlasting*—the more likely since Weinbaum listed Keller as one of his favorite authors—*The Adaptive Ultimate* deals with a tubercular girl who is injected with a drug that makes her body instantly adaptable to any environmental change. The result is the cure of her affliction, radiant beauty, high intelligence and the astonishing ability to defeat death by overcoming every possible obstacle.

The Adaptive Ultimate was the first Weinbaum story to be anthologized, appearing in *The Other Worlds*, a fantasy volume edited by Phil Stong in 1941. It has been dramatized on the radio at least twice, the last time on TALES OF TOMORROW in August, 1952. STUDIO ONE produced it as a full length show on television under the title of *Kyra Zelas* and it was re-enacted twice more under different titles and later released as a motion picture called *She-Devils*.

The strength of this story, so adaptable to the media of radio, television and motion pictures, rests in its compelling, powerful plot. It clearly showed that Weinbaum could be, when the market permitted him, considerably more than a mere literary stylist.

When Weinbaum wrote Schwartz on July 10, 1935, "I have been laid up as the result of a tonsil extraction for the past several weeks but expect to be able to send you material at a pretty steady rate from now on," there seemed to be little reason for concern. Weinbaum had already begun work on a second story under the John Jessel byline, *Proteus Island*. On Aug. 6, 1935 he wrote to Schwartz in a somewhat more disturbing vein. "Have been laid up again with a sort of imitation pneumonia as a complication from the tonsil extraction, and as a result the John Jessel story is still in the process of being finished."

Proteus Island was an adroitly written 13,000-word biological tale about an island where an ill-advised professor's experiment has changed the genetic structure of all animal life and vegetation, so that no two things are alike. The tale is weakened when Weinbaum fails to take full advantage of the potentially powerful plot situation and the story found acceptance nowhere under the John Jessel name.

It was obvious now that Weinbaum was a sick man. Each of his letters spoke of heavier and heavier X-Ray treatments which drained him of energy for long periods of time. Despite this, he continued to write. *The Red Peri* sold to ASTOUNDING STORIES on Aug. 17, 1935, brought $190 and was featured on the cover of the November, 1935 number. In an editorial in that issue, Tremaine wrote: Stanley G. Weinbaum has been very ill. I hope he's able to sit up and enjoy this month's cover and to see *The Red Peri* in print."

The Red Peri is a woman space pirate of phenomenal cunning, daring and beauty. The story was intended as the first of a series. Standing by itself, it proved an entertaining adventure story, barely classifying as science fiction, despite its interplanetary locale and the interesting concept that the vacuum of space would be harmless to a human being for short stretches of time.

In the same issue *The Adaptive Ultimate* appeared as a featured novelette, with its "superwoman" heroine. Add to these the immortal Black Margot of Urbs, from the Flame novels and the dominant characteristics of Patricia Burlingame of the Ham and Pat series and we find in Weinbaum a powerful fixation with the concept of the superwoman, who is brought into line by love of a man. This might be evidence of domination by a strong woman somewhere in his life or, more probably of his subconscious wish to meet a woman who was his intellectual equal.

Despite his illness, Weinbaum continued with his writing, careful to turn out the kind of stories he knew the magazines would buy. *Smothered Seas*, in collaboration with Ralph Milne Farley and *The Mad Moon* were sold on the same day, September 27th, for $110 and $100 respectively.

The Mad Moon is one of the finest of his queer animal stories. It combines such novel creations as the long-necked, big-headed, giggling "loonies;" a "parcat," half cat—half parrot; and semi-intelligent, rat-like "slinkers." Bizarre as this menagerie was, Weinbaum combined them all into a delightful, straight-faced minor masterpiece with just enough pathos to lift it out of the category of ordinary adventures.

The Mad Moon was probably the last story Weinbaum ever saw in print. On November 19th he wrote Schwartz: "Lord knows I'm pleased to get your check on *Redemption Cairn*. I've been in Chicago having some x-ray treatments again, and I'm flat on my back recovering from them. I don't know when I'll be able to get some real work done."

He never stopped trying. According to Ralph Milne Farley, though pain-wracked by throat cancer and barely able to speak above a whisper, he continued to work on *The Dictator's Sister*, the first draft of which he finished before he died.

December 14, 1935, Julius Schwartz, while in the synagogue, received the following telegram from Ray Palmer: *"Weinbaum died early this morning."* Though he had never met the man, Schwartz broke down and wept. At the end of the ceremony he offered a prayer for Weinbaum, who was of his faith.

"Did you know that Stanley Weinbaum took off on the Last Great Journey through the galaxies in December?" F. Orlin Tremaine informed his readers in ASTOUNDING. "That he set his course by the stars I do not doubt. ASTOUNDING STORIES is proud of his accomplishments in science fiction. He created a niche for himself which will be hard to fill."

"A few months before his untimely death," Charles D. Hornig, Weinbaum's discoverer wrote in an obituary in the April, 1936 WONDER STORIES, which ironically marked the end of that magazine under Gernsback's ownership, "he promised us a third tale in the 'Martian' series—but did not have time to complete it."

Fifteen months after his first science fiction story appeared, Stanley G. Weinbaum's meteoric career had ended.

Few men were as instantaneously liked as Weinbaum. He seemed to be surrounded by a sort of radiance, both mental and physical, but he was modest and unaffected with an outgoing friendliness and a genuine interest in people. Under the sponsorship of the Milwaukee Fictioneers, a memorial volume was published soon after Weinbaum's death. Conrad H. Ruppert, who printed FANTASY MAGAZINE, the fan publication edited by Julius Schwartz, played a key role in the preparation of this volume. He set the type of the 313-page *Dawn of Flame and Other Stories* by hand and ran it off two pages at a time in a strictly limited edition of 250 copies. The sheets were sent to Raymond A. Palmer in Milwaukee, who arranged with a binder to have the book bound in black leather and stamped in gold.

This was the first appearance of *Dawn of Flame*, a 25,000 word short novel, anywhere, and it revealed Stanley G. Weinbaum as a completely mature literary craftsman, tremendously talented in dialogue and superbly skilled in characterization. There is high poetry in the closing passages: ". . . Black Margot rode north from Selu through the night. In the sky before her were thin shadows leading phantom armies. Alexander the Great, Attila, Genghiz Khan, Tamurlane, Napoleon, and clearer than all, the battle queen Semiramis. All the mighty conquerers of the past, and where were *they*, where were their empires, and where, even, their bones? Far in the south were the graves of the men who had loved her, all except old Einar, who tottered like a feeble grey ghost across the world to find his."

The volume contained six shorter stories—*The Mad Moon, A Martian Odyssey, The Worlds of If, The Adaptive Ultimate, The Lotus Eaters* and *The Red Peri*. The introduction by Raymond A. Palmer was deemed too personal by Weinbaum's widow, so another by Lawrence A. Keating was substituted. Six copies with Palmer's introduction are known to exist.

Gernsback's WONDER STORIES was purchased by Standard Magazines and came under the editorial directorship of Leo Margulies. Margulies placed Mort Weisinger, Julius Schwartz' partner in the *Solar Sales Service* in charge of the magazine, which the Standard group re-titled THRILLING WONDER STORIES. Weisinger immediately decided to publish *The Circle of Zero*. An "idea" story, similar in mood to the Professor van Manderpootz series, it deals with the drawing up of memories from the past *and* the future. Too heavy on theory and too light on action, it reads more like a cinema synopsis than a completed work of fiction.

Learning for the first time that John Jessel was really a pen name for Stanley G. Weinbaum, Tremaine changed his mind about *Proteus Island* and published the novelette in the August, 1936 ASTOUNDING STORIES.

A short story, *Shifting Seas*, which had been

sold to AMAZING STORIES, shortly before Weinbaum's death, eventually appeared in the August, 1937 issue. It was a minor effort dealing with a volcanic explosion that diverts the gulf stream, almost freezing out Europe, and the eventual solution of the problem by the construction of an under-sea wall.

Now the search through Weinbaum's old papers, began in earnest. The first story to be rescued from obscurity was *Real and Imaginary*, a charming piece which turned on the solution to a mathematical formula. Re-titled *Brink of Infinity*, it was greeted with enthusiasm when it appeared in THRILLING WONDER STORIES for December, 1936. No one noticed that it was actually a condensation and re-write of George Allan England's *The Tenth Question*, which appeared in the December 18, 1915 issue of ALL-STORY MAGAZINE. Obviously *Brink of Infinity* was an early exercise in writing which Weinbaum never intended to have published.

In 1938, several important changes occurred in the science fiction field. AMAZING STORIES was sold to Ziff-Davis magazines and Raymond A. Palmer became editor. He had Ralph Milne Farley polish Weinbaum's *actual* last story, *The Dictator's Sister*, which was published under the title of *The Revolution of 1980* in the October and November, 1938 issues of AMAZING STORIES. Having for its theme a dictatorship of the United States, run by a woman who, through hormone injections has changed herself into a man, the story is excellent light entertainment.

The Black Flame, purchased at a bargain price of $200 for 65,000 words, helped insure the success of the first—January, 1939—issue of STARTLING STORIES. There seemed to be no end to "last" stories by Stanley G. Weinbaum. His sister, Helen Kasson, finished one, *Tidal Moon*, which was published in THRILLING WONDER, December, 1938, but as he had written only a page and a half and had left no outline, it was not significant.

Firmly entrenched at Ziff-Davis, which brought out books as well as periodicals, Raymond A. Palmer persuaded the publishers that it would be a good idea to consider seriously Weinbaum's early philosophical novel, *The New Adam*. This appeared in hard covers in 1939 with some rather ambiguous endorsements from Edgar Rice Burroughs, A. Merritt, Raph Milne Farley and Raymond A. Palmer on the inner jacket. A story of a superman with a dual mind who, because of his fatal passion for a woman, sacrifices the opportunity to lead the race that will replace humanity, is morbidly fascinating despite its extremly gloomy outlook.

It seemed incredible that the same man who wrote with the delightfully light a touch in *A Martian Odyssey* and who was able to produce so gay a frolic as *The Mad Moon* while dying of cancer, could have been so devout a disciple of Schopenhauer in a more youthful period.

Still another very early novel, *The Mad Brain*, was condensed into novelette form and peddled by Julius Schwartz to the magazines with no takers. Finally it was published complete as *The Dark Other* in book form by the Fantasy Publishing Co., Inc., Los Angeles, in 1950. Based on the Jekyll and Hyde theme, it seemes hardly worthy of Weinbaum's unique talent and is of interest chiefly as a collector's item.

A clever short vignette, *Graph* dealing with the relationship of business to blood pressure was uncovered by Julius Schwartz and published in the September, 1936 issue of FANTASY MAGAZINE. As late as 1957, the July issue of CRACK DETECTIVE AND MYSTERY STORIES featured a rather secondrate detective story by Stanley G. Weinbaum, they retitled *Green Glow of Death* from his original title *Murder on the High Seas*.

In the final analysis, the true importance of Weinbaum can best be estimated by his influence. No less a master of science fiction than Eric Frank Russel, quite frankly imitated both Weinbaum's style and copied his facility for queer animals to score a success with *The Saga of Pelican West*, published in ASTOUNDING STORIES for Feb., 1937; Henry Kuttner attracted attention in science fiction by teaming up with Arthur K. Barnes to produce the Hollywood-on-the-Moon Stories, mimicking Weinbaum even down to the characters Tommy Strike and Gerry Carlyle who were little more than carbon copies of Ham and Pat; John Russell Fearn, a very popular science fiction writer during the late thirties, invented the pen name of Polton Cross, just to write stories that were parodies of Weinbaum.

More subtly, Weinbaum's methods have influenced dozens of other authors, most strikingly Philip José Farmer in his masterpiece, *The Lovers*, a tale which would have done Weinbaum no discredit.

How enduring Weinbaum's personal reputation will be depends upon a relatively small number of stories, probably *A Martian Odyssey*, *The Lotus Eaters*, *The Adaptive Ultimate*, *The Dawn of Flame*, and, paradoxially, *The Brink of Infinity*. The short period of writing before the curtain descended, the insistence of editors that he write to a formula, the ravages of illness and the economic depression make it remarkable that he achieved even as much as he did. The legacy he left the science fiction world, however, is still apparent everywhere.

Turn to page 59 and enjoy a short story by this gifted writer, appearing in print for the first time in a professional magazine.

GRAPH —An Unusual Short-Short— **By STANLEY G. WEINBAUM**

APPROPRIATION

by ROBERT SILVERBERG

08-11-2306
FROM: Dep't of Extraterrestrial Affairs, Rio
TO: Col. Samuel Naysmith, Terran Cultural and Military Mission, Algenib (Gamma Pegasi) IX ("Morpeth")
SUBJECT: Budget reduction

You are advised that the budget for the year 2306-07, effective 01-12-2306, authorizes a reduction of $11 billion in extraterrestrial aid. In compliance, we are forced to discontinue many current outposts.

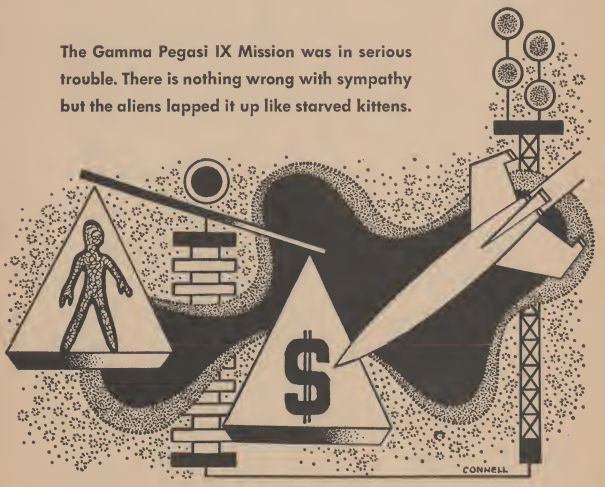
This includes the Gamma Pegasi IX mission. Begin terminal activities at once. The outpost is to be discontinued and all Terran personnel returned to Earth for reassignment 01-12-2306.

Rawlins
D. E. A., Rio

THE WEATHER ON MORPETH was fine that day. The skies were cloudless and steely-blue; the humidity was low, after a week of rain. Colonel Naysmith was glad to see the last of the rain. That old spear-wound in his calf was long healed, but it still gave him an unpleasant twinge in bad weather. He had acquired it on Nelden IV, thirteen years ago.

Naysmith didn't mind the twinges. What he

The Gamma Pegasi IX Mission was in serious trouble. There is nothing wrong with sympathy but the aliens lapped it up like starved kittens.



© 1959, by Robert Silverberg

minded was the way the Morpessin winced along with him in perfect empathy—sometimes even clutching their left shins when a particularly hot shaft of pain rippled through his leg. But today, the weather was fine, and so was Naysmith's mood. And the little aliens, mirroring his mood, were playful and happy.

Naysmith was a tall, stocky man, mostly muscle. He was conducting a class in marksmanship in the forest a mile outside the Terran base. With him were six Morpessin, slim beings no higher than his midsection, learning how to use Terran needle-guns.

"The principle's the same as in your blowguns," Naysmith said. "The tube propels a lethal instrument, a poisoned dart. But instead of using wind power, you let your propulsive charge do the work."

He scanned the drab green foliage and spotted a moving object—a quill-studded hedgehog-like thing. Calmly he aimed the needlegun and squeezed off a shot. The deadly needle covered three hundred feet with a singing hum and thwacked into the hedgehog's side. Naysmith grinned. He had always been a good hand with a needlegun.

The aliens were grinning too, and exclaiming about the accuracy of his shot—and at such a distance, too!

He led them through the brush to the fallen hedgehog. "See? Aim, squeeze, and there it is! But of course the aiming technique is entirely different from what you're used to. It—"

He stopped. A new animal had entered the glade—a big four-legged beast, its glossy red hide covered with black stripes, its snout pendulous and quivering. There was plenty of meat on the beast. Naysmith lifted his gun, zeroing in on the big dull eye.

Before he could squeeze the trigger one of the Morpessin came bounding up against his arm, deflecting the shot. Naysmith whirled in surprise.

"We do not kill animals that large," the alien told him with a trace of reproach. "It—is—unpleasant for us to do so."

Naysmith chewed uneasily on his lip. Every day of his four months on Morpeth he had learned something new about the natives. "You mean you can sense the minds of animals too?"

"Only large ones. The *srussa*"—he pointed to the dead hedgehog—"has only the shadow of a mind. He dies quickly without causing us pain. But a big animal—"

Naysmith nodded. "I'm sorry. I didn't understand."

He felt a bead of sweat trickling down his forehead and flicked it away. He tried to keep the tension from mounting in him, because he knew that the aliens would detect his mood immediately.

There were twenty-seven Earthmen on Morpeth. They were Naysmith's responsibility. If Naysmith had known what he was getting into, he would have thought twice about setting up the base on this planet.

"Okay," he said. "Let's aim for that tree over there and try to hit the big yellow knot."

He waited for some protest, but none came. Evidently the Morpessin were not in rapport with the souls of trees, at any rate. They raised their guns and fired. Their aim was surprisingly good, for beginners.

At 1540 hours Naysmith called a halt to the practice session, sent the aliens on their way, and returned to the Terran encampment. The Morpessin had made considerable progress in handling the guns. They learned fast.

Naysmith got back to home base just about 1600. Eight or nine of his men were sitting out front of the Communications shack. They were passing a slip of paper back and forth to each other, and each man who got it would read it, shake his head, mutter something, and pass it on. They snapped to attention when they saw Naysmith coming.

"At ease," he told them. But for once there was no slackening of tension. Brewster, the Communications man, handed the slip of paper to Naysmith.

"Sir, this was received ten minutes ago. From Rio."

Naysmith scanned the message quickly. *Budget Reduction . . . discontinue outposts . . . terminal activities . . . returned to Earth for reassignment.* The phrases leaped at his eyes like so many tiny daggers.

"Sir, what are we going to do? We can't leave Morpeth!" The words came from Bryant, the socio-analyst, who had been the first to recognize the unique nature of the native psychology.

Naysmith stared squarely at him. "We're not going to leave."

"But the appropriation—" began his aide, Major Thompson.

"Appropriation be damned," Naysmith said. "We don't have any choice. We're staying here. Brewster, go make subradio contact with Earth. I'll send them a message right away."

08-11-2306
FROM: Col. Samuel Naysmith, Morpeth
TO: N. J. Rawlins, Department of Extraterrestrial Affairs, Rio de Janeiro, S. A., Earth.
SUBJECT: Modification of orders.

We are in receipt of your message informing us of reduction in Department appropriation, causing suspension of activities on many worlds currently occupied by Terran outposts.

Be advised herewith that discontinuing the outpost on Morpeth will have severe deletcrious effects on the native population. In view of unique conditions obtaining here, we request reconsideration of status. If at all possible revise previous instructions and rescind order suspending activities here. Disruption of present relationship will have severe consequences.

We will await immediate reply. Naysmith

08-11-2306
FROM: Rawlins, Rio
TO: Naysmith, Morpeth

Alteration of present plans will be costly and unwise. The schedule is drawn and Morpeth is among the worlds to be abandoned, since it has low strategic value.

Our previous communication remains in effect.

Your outpost is discontinued as of 01-12-2306 and all personnel are to return to Earth.

Rawlins

08-11-2306
FROM: Naysmith, Morpeth
TO: Rawlins, Rio

You don't seem to get the point. Abandoning Morpeth now will work psychological hardship on the natives. Strategic value or no strategic value, if we pull out now the traumatic effect on the natives is going to be tremendous.

Can't you find some other world you can discontinue instead? We need time to work ourselves out of this fix without hurting the aliens here.

Naysmith

09-11-2306
FROM: Rawlins, Rio
TO: Naysmith, Morpeth

You've been in the Corps long enough to know better than to ask for special privilege, Colonel. The budget has to be trimmed somewhere and you people will have to fall in line. That's all there is to it.

Suspension order is still in effect as of 01-12-2306. Cut out the crybaby stuff and start terminal operations. And no more subradio bulletins. This correspondence is getting expensive. We have to watch our budget these days.

Rawlins

Naysmith held a meeting of his inner command in the afternoon: Major Thompson, Bryant, Englehardt the linguistics man, and Donovan of Planning. It was easier to confer with a small group than with all twenty-seven men. Besides, contact with the natives had to proceed pretty much as usual. It was important not to let the Morpessin suspect that there was trouble.

Donovan ran his wiry fingers through coarse reddish hair and groaned, "Dammit, can't you make Rawlins *understand*?"

Naysmith shook his head. "Try arguing with a stone. He doesn't care what kind of a fix we're in; he's only worried about his budget. Nothing we can say is going to make him change his mind."

"You'd think he'd listen to reason," growled Thompson bitterly.

"No," Naysmith said. "That's the trouble. Reason won't work. Logically our predicament doesn't make any sense at all. And so we can't communicate it to the people back home." He looked at Bryant. "Bryant, tell us just exactly what would happen if we pulled out of Morpeth in December as ordered?"

The socioanalyst's bleak expression deepened. "The results would be catastrophic. A wave of mass suicides, probably. And a national neurosis that would persist for generations. If we left now we'd wreck everything we've accomplished so far, and then some."

"High-level empathy," Englehardt muttered. "Emotional bonds. Parent fixations. Who could have imagined such a thing?"

"It's happened," Naysmith said. "These aliens are like little children—children with high emotional sensitivity. They pick up our every mood. They're depressed when we're depressed, happy when we're happy."

"And they'll kill themselves if we leave them now," Engelhart said. "We'll be *abandoning* them. The shock will be too much for their delicate little souls." He spat out a vivid Germanic curse. The linguistics expert did not care to spend the rest of his life on Morpeth.

"Are we sure," Thompson asked hesitantly, "that our conclusion is valid? Maybe our departure won't be as big a blow to them as we think it will be."

"It will be," Bryant said flatly. "The Morpessin have developed—in four months—a tremendous bond with us, of a kind we don't even understand. It's some kind of mental linkage."

"Mental rubbish!" Englehardt bellowed.

Naysmith shot the linguist a warning glance. Bryant went on, "We can't see the bond, and we can't measure it—and we can't understand it. But that doesn't mean it isn't there. These aliens have fixed onto us—"

"Like leeches," Engelhardt said.

"Yes. Like leeches," the socioanalyst agreed. "The situation's a rough one. We've been called back to Earth—but can we just rip ourselves away from the Morpessin, knowing what will happen if we do?"

"We're prisoners of our own consciences," Thompson murmured hollowly.

"Maybe so," Bryant said. "As I see it we're bound to stay here until we've broken this fixation."

"Suppose we never succeed?" Englehardt demanded.

Bryant shrugged. "Look in your own heart, friend. Do you want to hurt the Morpessin?"

The burly linguistics man looked momentarily nonplussed. He knotted his thick fingers together and glared at Bryant. "They—they are harmless people. No—how can I say that? Harmless? *Pfah!* But on the surface they are weak and kind and gentle, and they need our help. But—but—"

"Would *you* want to leave here next month, knowing the psychic damage your departure will cause?"

Engelhardt scowled. "I have no answer for that."

He looked down at the packed soil floor of the tent. Naysmith said, "We're not getting anywhere. There may not be anywhere to get. But I'm open for suggestions relevant to our getting out of here. We'll meet again at this time tomorrow. Dismissed."

After they had gone, Naysmith remained alone in his tent to think this thing through. They had landed on Morpeth four months ago, after a preliminary scouting ship had verified the existence of intelligent humanoid life there. The scout had not made contact with the natives. That job was left to Naysmith and his outfit.

First Contact was easy. Engelhardt had the language solved quickly, most humanoid peoples tend to organize their linguistic processes around a few building-blocks that hold constant throughout the universe, and once those blocks are mastered it is not difficult to comprehend the general outlines of a language, with detailed understanding coming

soon after. Welcomed by the aliens, the Earthmen set up a small outpost.

Morpeth was an Earthlike world in most respects: the gravity was a bit weaker, the atmosphere a bit thinner, the vegetation a bit sparser, but the planet was close enough to Earthnorm so that the men felt no discomfort. The people were humanoid, pint-sized, with saucer-like eyes that rotated, tarsierwise, independent of each other. It made for a startling effect in conversation.

And the aliens were friendly.

They flocked around the Earthmen, eager to learn. Because of their small size and their almost comic gravity of deportment, the Earthmen found themselves taking a paternal attitude toward the aliens. As the weeks passed, the Morpessin became familiar friends to many of the Earthmen.

And the Earthmen noticed a curious thing—the complexity and variety of the alien emotions. The little beings went from gloom to joy in moments; they were sensitive, easily upset, forever apologizing or expecting apologies for fancied slights.

It was not until the third month that Naysmith and his men realized they had a problem of the first magnitude. The early inklings had come when Naysmith had casually said, in regard to the building of a power plant on a nearby river, "Naturally, we'll help you all we can. But we want you to understand the principle fully yourselves, so that after we've left Morpeth—"

The look on the alien's face made him stop.

"You—will leave us?" the alien asked in a whisper.

Naysmith frowned. "Eventually, yes. Perhaps other Earthmen will come. We're not going to be here forever, you know."

The little alien showed signs of inner agitation. "We did not know—we thought you were here for always. We have misunderstood—"

The incident ended there. But it was the beginning. And subsequent conversations made it quite clear that the Morpessin would take it hard if the Earthmen left.

Naysmith had expected to spend eighteen months on Morpeth. He had hoped that by then he would have succeeded in weaning the Morpessin away from their dependent attitude.

But now he didn't have eighteen months. Thanks to some economy-minded bureaucrat hundreds of light-years away on Earth, he had about three weeks to break the news to the aliens.

They were going to take it badly. Colonel Naysmith was a deeply worried man.

Naysmith spent a sleepless night, tossing and turning restlessly. Toward dawn he reached his decision. He tapped out an announcement, left his tent, and posted the half-page of sternly formal prose on the camp bulletin board.

OFFICIAL DIRECTIVE

10-11-2306

Pursuant to instructions received from the Department of Extraterrestrial Affairs, we are to discontinue operations on Morpeth by the end of the month.

These instructions are to be observed in full. Terminal activities shall begin immediately. Current alien-education projects are to be brought to an end with dispatch, and any scientific observation programs must be concluded within ten days whether or not such conclusion will yield successful results.

The aliens are to be informed of our departure. The psychological effects of this will undoubtedly be severe, but we have no alternative. We are under the authority of the Department of Extraterrestrial Affairs and the Department's orders must be obeyed no matter what the consequences.

Colonel Naysmith, C.O.

Naysmith stood inside his tent, watching the men approach the bulletin board. Their expressions were worth observing. They displayed emotions ranging from anger and incredulity to something not far from mutiny.

Bryant, the socioanalyst, came to see Naysmith immediately after reading the notice, in great emotional distress.

"Sir, that announcement—how can you do something like that?"

"Like what?"

"You know what I mean, sir. Like abandoning Morpeth. Breaking away from the Morpessin."

Naysmith's face tightened with strain. "I've received my orders from Earth, Lieutenant Bryant. That's sufficient motive."

"*Orders!*" Bryant spat the word out as if it were a curse. "Begging your pardon, sir, but what would you do if you got orders from Earth to cut your own throat?"

"I would assume that Earth had good reason for such an order," Naysmith said in a cold voice. "I would in all likelihood obey the order."

"Sir, yesterday you thought we were going to stay here—you said we'd refuse to leave Morpeth no matter what Earth ordered."

"I've considered the matter more carefully, Mister Bryant. My conclusions are out there on the board."

"So everything we've done here is going to be ruined," Bryant burst out. "We'll leave the aliens in a state of psychic shock—let them think we've betrayed them!"

"It's a nasty situation, Bryant. I agree one hundred percent with you. I'm with you all the way. But we have to obey orders, whether we like those orders or not."

Bryant's military training reluctantly asserted itself. He calmed visibly; his mouth curved down in a bitter scowl, and he nodded. "Yes, sir. But we'll never be able to forgive ourselves for this. None of us."

"Perhaps not," Naysmith said. "Perhaps we'll carry the scars of this decision with us for the rest of our lives. But we're leaving next month."

Later that day Naysmith rode into the Morpessin village to see the local chiefs. He brought with him Bryant, Donovan, and the agricultural adviser, Ridley.

The aliens were aware that something had come up. The council of seven that ruled the entire region was waiting in grave array for the Earthmen as they entered the village, and there was no gaiety

on the wizened little alien faces now. Good empaths that they were, they mirrored the inner doubts and distress of the Earthmen.

Naysmith said bluntly, once they were in the councilroom, "We have received orders to leave Morpeth."

"No!" The shocked outcry came from two of the Morpressin councillors at once. Juskilon, the headman, said in a quavering voice, "Leave us now? After all you have done—the help you have given us—"

"We've been ordered to leave Morpeth very soon. It grieves us greatly. Our work here is incomplete."

"But if you leave us," protested one of the natives, "we will wither and die like vines cut loose from the ground!"

Naysmith rose suddenly from the counciltable. He looked at his three men, each of them darkfaced and brooding over the harsh necessity of the thing they were being forced to do. The Colonel said, "I'm going to leave now and return to the base. Donovan—Bryant—Ridley—you three talk to our friends here, explain exactly why we have to leave. Beg their forgiveness. Try to make them understand. I can't stay here any more."

He spun stiffly on his heel and walked out. It was not wise for him to remain at the meeting. If he wanted the departure from Morpeth to be anything but a total tragedy, he knew, he would have to avoid prolonged contact with any of the aliens from here until departure date.

During the two weeks that remained before departure, terminal activities proceeded with remarkable smoothness. The power-plant project was hastened along to a quick and successful finish. Jarvis wrapped up his astronomical observations, and Engelhardt accelerated his linguistics project of taping samples of Morpessin speech and of compiling a dictionary.

Similarly, every other man cooperated to assure a smooth break on the first of December. But they were unhappy. They hated what they were being forced to do. They hated the Rio office for its mulish dollarwise policy. They hated Naysmith for having given in so easily and acceded to the curtailment order.

But mostly, they hated themselves.

Strangely, the Morpessin were taking the departure much more calmly than any of the Earthmen expected.

"I don't understand it," Bryant said. "They've changed so in the last few weeks—ever since we had that meeting with them at the village councilhall. They don't act as if their universe will come to an end the day we leave, not any more. They seem—well, resigned to our leaving."

"You're wrong," Naysmith said evenly. "They dread the day we go. They're being polite, trying to keep us from worrying about what will happen to them after we leave."

Bryant's frown deepened. "I guess that's it, sir." He balled his fist and swatted the air. "What a lousy mess!"

"Orders are orders," Naysmith reminded him grimly.

01-12-2306

FROM: Col. Samuel Naysmith, Morpeth

TO: N. J. Rawlins, Department of Extraterrestrial Affairs, Rio de Janeiro, S. A., Earth

SUBJECT: Termination of base

This is official notification that pursuant to your order of 08-11-2306 the mission on this planet has been discontinued effective today. All personnel are being removed from this planet at 1400 hours, 01-12-2306, Galactic Standard Reckoning.

Pursuant to orders this mission is returning to Earth for reassignment. Expected date of arrival is 22-12-2306. Terminal activities were carried out without complications. Naysmith

01-12-2306

FROM: Department of Extraterrestrial Affairs, Rio

TO: Colonel Samuel Naysmith, Terran Cultural and Military Mission, Algenib (Gamma Pegasi) IX ("Morpeth")

SUBJECT: Acknowledgment of withdrawal notice.

Your subradio message received here and noted. Full report on your Morpeth activities should be ready for submission in standard form upon arrival.

We will be interested in discussing this case in detail when you arrive. Rawlins

It was the first of December, 2306, by the standard calendar that every Earthman lived by. It was some other day in the Morpressin calendar—a spring day, with the rainy season a month in the past and the fertile buds of the new growth-time pushing up out of the soil. It was the day of departure.

Naysmith stood in the middle of the denuded area that had been his camp. Here tents had stood; there, trees had been hewn. It was all gone, now. The ship stood alone, a shining bronzed awl poised for flight in the middle of its blast area. There was nothing left but goodbyes.

Naysmith had not spoken to any of the aliens during the entire terminating period. He had left that job up to his deputies, and he himself had remained in camp, supervising the finishing-up job. Now a knot of sad, soulful-eyed Morpessin had gathered in a big ring around the bare clearing.

Ten of Naysmith's men were at work setting up a baling-wire fence around the area. It was Bryant's idea; he was afraid that the Morpessin might come flocking to immolate themselves in the flames of the spaceship's tail rockets. So ten downcast Earthmen were putting up a fence.

It had been a difficult two weeks for Naysmith. Not once during that time had he spoken to any of his men except to give an order or to answer a question. The self-imposed solitude had been uncomfortable but necessary, if he had any hope of a successful departure.

The men were bitter. Some of their resentment was directed at Naysmith, and he knew his popularity among them was at an all-time low.

It mattered to him, but not enough to affect his judgment. He knew what had to be done.

The time was 1345; fifteen minutes to blastoff.

He spotted the council-chiefs standing in a morose little clump and jogged over to them. Seven pairs of dish-shaped eyes swivelled up to look at him. The little aliens looked like pets about to be evicted by their master.

Naysmith said gravely, "Now we must leave."

An alien replied, "We will miss you. You have helped us beyond all measure."

"We are greatly grieved to be compelled to leave you this way," Naysmith said.

"We grieve for you. We share your sadness and our hearts are melted by your plight," said the alien.

Naysmith decided it was not safe to prolong the interchange. He was satisfied with what he had heard.

"Farewell," he said.

"Farewell."

The aliens were doleful, bleak-faced. But Naysmith rejoiced. There would be no mass suicides when the Earthmen departed.

He entered the ship. Peering through the port, he saw hordes of the aliens ringing the fence, staring mournfully at their departing mentors. At precisely 1400 hours, the blastoff signal rang loud and clear.

The Earth ship rose high on a towering pillar of flame, arched into the heavens, and converted to hyperdrive. Within instants, Morpeth was unimaginably distant.

Colonel Naysmith heaved a sigh of relief.

"It worked out better than I thought it would," Naysmith said. It was mid-afternoon of the 22nd of December; his ship had docked at Rioport that morning, smack on schedule, and he was in the office of Director Rawlins of the Department of Extraterrestrial Affairs. "For a while," Naysmith went on, "I thought we were going to have real trouble making a breakaway."

Rawlins nodded. He was a thin windburned man with knobby cheekbones and searching blue eyes. "So did I. Those first subradiograms you sent us, refusing to leave Morpeth—"

Naysmith reddened. "At the time I sent those messages it looked like we were stuck there. Then I stopped to think the thing through, and I figured out what line we had to take."

Rawlins glanced at the bulky report lying on his desk. Naysmith had compiled it during the three-week homeward voyage. "You don't know how relieved I felt when I got your final message announcing withdrawal. We had almost given your whole group up as lost."

"We almost were. *Almost.*" Naysmith grinned cheerfully at his superior officer. "When we found out what the story was, that the natives had formed this—this—well, umbilical relation toward us, I started worrying. But it wasn't until the night after I got your message that I realized what the real situation was. The aliens were capitalizing on the fact that we had consciences. I figured we could do the same thing."

Rawlins frowned. "I don't quite follow that, Colonel."

"I'll try to make it clearer. The aliens were weak people. They didn't want us to leave. So they let us know subtly that if we did leave, the shock would be more than they could bear. In other words, they were self-pitiers. If we pulled out, they would sit down and moan, 'Poor deserted us! Poor deserted us!' until they died of sheer self-sympathy.

"But there's another side to that coin, Director Rawlins. Being so sensitive, the Morpessin had a high empathy quotient: they suffered our sufferings, as the phrase goes. I have an old wound in my leg, and during the rainy season it kicked up a little. The Morpessin somehow picked up my pain, felt it themselves. Well, I did the same thing about this departure business. I posted a directive telling my men we were going to pull out. My men are human beings; they have consciences. They were aware of what was going to happen to the Morpessin when we left, and it worried them. They felt guilty, unhappy, upset."

"And the Morpessins picked that up just the way they did the pain in your leg?"

"They sure did! They knew how my men were suffering, and they knew why. Their empathy came into play. They began to suffer because my men were suffering because the aliens were going to suffer when we left."

"But how did *you* stand in all this?"

"Far to the distance," Naysmith said. "I was the only one who really knew what was going on. If the Morpessin had much contact with me, they'd realize that *I* wasn't suffering. I didn't feel the remorse that my men did. And they would have suspected."

"And naturally you couldn't let your men know what was going on, either."

Naysmith nodded in agreement. "Exactly—I had to keep my men thinking we were all a bunch of sadistic ogres. So long as my men felt guilty about leaving, everything was okay. The Morpessin knew how they were suffering. And instead of pitying themselves, they began pitying *us.*" Naysmith chuckled. "That psychic bond, or whatever it was, dissolved in a hurry. The Morpessins were quite happy to see us get going, after two weeks of empathy with our guilt and worry."

"You think you made a successful departure?"

"I'm sure of it," Naysmith said. "But I have a hunch we'll have to let Morpeth develop on its own for a while; they aren't ready to be helped. They're parasites, looking for somebody to attach themselves to."

"Like you and your men."

"Yes. Like us."

"Your men all know now what you did?"

"Of course. I told them the moment we were in hyperspace. They had a tremendous grudge built up against me, you see. I was the fall guy, kowtowing to official authority and ruthlessly sacrificing the poor little Morpessin in the name of the departmental budget."

An odd smile appeared on Rawlins' bony face. He chuckled curiously, looked down at the papers on his desk, then up at Naysmith.

He said, "I owe you a little apology on the appropriation business, Colonel. Our budget wasn't cut."

For an instant it didn't register with Naysmith. Then his jaws moved slowly, and words came out. "Budget—not cut? *Huh?*"

Rawlins was smiling. "Suppose, Colonel, you

were faced by a problem that simply can't be solved by any legitimate method, but yet *must* be solved. What do you do?"

"I don't follow."

"Yes, you do, really. You know what to do, because you did it on Morpeth."

"You mean—fight dirty?"

"If you can't win by the rules, and it's absolutely necessary that you win, Colonel, you win any way you can. In your case it involved deliberately concealing your true intentions from your men. In my case it necessitated dreaming up a mythical budget cut."

Naysmith still did not understand. "But—why do that?"

Rawlins said, "I was getting a weekly report from you people out on Morpeth, Colonel. And each week I got a little more worried about you. There was an appropriation, but it wasn't a financial one. *You* were getting appropriated, the whole bunch of you. The aliens were taking advantage of your sympathy. They were capitalizing on their own helplessness. Another few months on that planet, Colonel, and you would have been so hopelessly enmeshed with those people that you could never get away. We don't like to lose twenty-seven of our best men, you see. So I decided to cut off the appropriation that was going on out there."

"You sent word to me that we were to terminate immediately—"

"Naturally. And I blamed it on the General Assembly. What would have happened if I sent you an order to pack up and go on to some other planet? You would have argued that your work on Morpeth was too important. We might have yattered back and forth over the subwaves for a year, and by then it would have been too late."

"So you set up a straw man for me. You let me blame the whole thing on those filthy so-and-sos who cut the budget, and that didn't leave me a leg to stand on. I *had* to work out some way of breaking loose from Morpeth within the time limit."

Rawlins smiled and stubbed out his cigarette. "We had faith in you, Colonel. We knew you weren't the kind of man who would refuse an order, no matter how damfool the order sounded. I'll admit we were shaken up by your first few messages, but they were understandable. It wasn't till you realized that you *had* to get off Morpeth that you figured a way to do it."

Naysmith rose. "I think I'd better go explain this to my men, sir. They're getting up a petition to the U.N. about the budget-cutting business."

"You'd better talk them out of it. Otherwise I may have some very complicated explaining to do myself," Rawlins said. "I'll read through your final report on Morpeth immediately. And there'll be a new assignment for you and your men after the usual furlough."

"Thank you, sir."

Naysmith saluted and started to leave. As he reached the door, Rawlins said, "Oh—Colonel. That petition your men are drafting—don't destroy it. Just file it away somewhere."

"Sir?"

Rawlins shrugged unhappily. "There are a few reactionaries in the General Assembly who seem to think Earth's spread a little too thin through the galaxy. They're agitating for a cut in our budget—a *real* cut. I don't think they'll get anywhere, but we may need the petition someday."

Or you may need to work the same trick twice, Naysmith thought. But he did not voice the thought. He simply saluted again, left, and went down the hall to the gravshaft. There were a lot of things he had to explain to his men.

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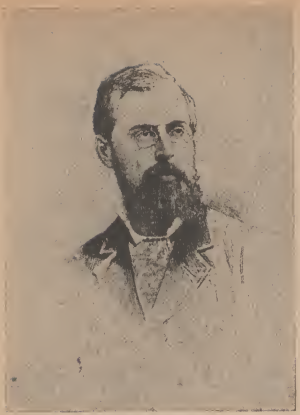

ALBERT ROBIDA

SALUTE TO ROBIDA

MASTERMIND OF SCIENCE FICTION

by DON GLASSMAN

It has often been said that a prophet is seldom held in honor by the country of his birth. But that ancient and enduring truism could just as appropriately be re-phrased to read: "A prophet is seldom honored by the age his wisdom helped to make great." The amazing Robida was a case in point.

THE SIXTH DECADE of the twentieth century seems to be a ripe time and a good place to write one man's name in bold letters across the page—

ALBERT ROBIDA

Much of the "impossible" world he conceived in the nineteenth century is the world we know today or will know in the near future.

First let's establish this unusual man's identity: Our mastermind of science fiction and art lived in France between 1848 and 1926. He produced prodigious quantities of serious art, literature and so-called "scientific nonsense." He attracted wide attention in his native country, but far less world fame than his eminent contemporary Jules Verne.

When we compare their works, it can hardly be denied that Verne excelled Robida as a writer of entertainment for the sake of entertainment. Ro-

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TRAVELING DE LUXE

All aboard for the Madrid-Gibraltar-Tanger Express! This could be an aerial torpedo train which travels through an elevated tube before diving under the ocean at the Straits of Gibraltar and presto! you are in the North African metropolis of Tangers. The departure has all the excitement and gayety of a ship sailing.

bida worked for his "sacred cause"—he wanted to warn humanity that the age of science and electricity would fan the fires of war and the ambitions of dictators.

Long before the Space Age Maestro Robida wrote: "Peace on Earth is old-fashioned. We must also worry about peace on Earth and in the air."

This simple prophecy, with its dire implications, was set down by Robida almost eighty years ago.

With his uncanny imaginative discernment he described space flights, anti-aircraft gunnery, aerial attacks, armor-plated warplanes, underground and submarine warfare. One-man submarines, multi-cannon machine guns and bacteriological warfare were part of the grim picture which he painted for his often utterly incredulous contemporarics. Of course his prophetic vision took in much more than the art of waging war. He drew blue-prints of numerous developments that have materialized in all but a few minor particulars since his death.

Frequently I run across news items which remind me that one more Robida prophecy has come true. International television, for instance. The modern science of meteorology and its valiant efforts to control and manipulate our climate is another prophecy which is rapidly becoming a reality.

Certain highly technical and practical aspects of scicnce also appear with great frequency in the fiction of Jules Verne, H. G. Wells and Edward Bellamy. But so far as I can determine no writer, artist, scientist or poet since Leonardo da Vinci can match the accuracy of Robida's predictions. The materialism, tempo and psychology of our age were set forth with realistic accuracy by Robida in the 1880's.

How did he manage to visualize the future with such clarity? The superstitious would call it black magic. My own belief is that he prognosticated

ALL ABOARD FOR THE MOON

Spaceship flights to the great Earth Satellite are a commonplace in Robida's concept of the 20th century. Here you see the takeoff. The skipper sits in his transparent (plexiglass?) bubble and the passengers on the poop deck bid goodbye to their Earthbound friends. Note the battery of incandescent lights on the left. These high-intensity lamps would make Hollywood's producers glow with envy. With such "kliegs" they could film the nearby planets from one of Robida's spaceships. Anyway, here is an idea to mull over when the conversation at Mike Romanoff's grows dull.

WHAT'S COOKING?

Ninteenth Century dining was a leisurely pastime. Every meal was cooked and served to order. But 20th century eating, prophesied Robida, will become an industry wherein the preparation of food will be on a hitherto undreamed-of scale. The food factory shown here is the nearest thing to an automated plant. Soup travels through a large-diameter pipeline. The ingredients are added to the pot with the help of a power ladle. A bugler times the activities of the food-handlers. Half a dozen food-tasters sample the results before the end-products are passed on to the consumer.

Photos Courtesy of Don Glassman

THE SHAPE OF SHIPS TO COME

Twenty years before the first engine-powered flight by the Wright Brothers in North Carolina, Robida published this assortment of high-speed jet-powered, military aircraft. Long before the wind tunnel was invented, Robida seemed to understand the principle of streamlining. Note the absence of propellers. The projecting objects or vanes were probably intended as stabilizers and rudder devices. Several of these aircraft mount cannons fore and aft.

FOR TIRED MUSEUM FEET

Flat feet, corns and bunions won't bother you when you take an art tour of the Louvre on this rolling conveyance. Footsore camera-bugs, weary of hauling heavy equipment, go along for the ride. Note the loudspeaker in the lower left hand corner. This delights sightseers with a running commentary concerning the painters and the museum masterpieces. The basic idea of a mobile audience was used to good advantage in the Futurama Exhibit at the New York World's Fair. Recorded art lectures are now available to sightseers visiting the National Gallery in Washington.

from clues. How else, for instance, can we explain Robida's masterful blue-print of present-day television developments?

Circa 1884 a German named Paul Gottlieb Nipkow (1860-1940) conceived the mechanical scanning disc, forerunner of the modern electronic TV scanner. Nipkow's crude invention may have planted a fertile idea in Robida's mind. If so, this idea took root in soil of a unique texture and sprouted into some incredible imaginative concepts. Taken altogether they constitute a major milestone for the then unheard-of television art and industry.

Robida conceived TV spectaculars of such ingenuity, variety and brillance that the programmers of the Twentieth Century have virtually nothing additional to contribute. Television operas, TV advertising, TV coverage of battlefronts, TV education and instruction, TV special events and TV stage dramas—all were described by Robida. A good many TV executives and directors who have basked in the sunlight of publicity for their alleged achievements in TV programming would undoubtedly like us to forget Albert Robida.

Just as Edison's first electric lamps began to flicker over the sidewalks of New York Robida charted the outlines of what he called the Electric Age, replete with motorized traffic, large-scale industrialization and push-button living.

H. G. Wells and Jules Verne found science fiction a good vehicle for Utopian idealism. Robida however used the medium as a sounding board for his alarm and cynicism concerning the future turn of events.

With words and pictures Robida made a double-barreled assault on the twentieth century. Despite his artistic inclinations and his love for the cultural heritage of Europe, he prophesied that science

TIMES SQUARE TOMORROW?

One day—and sooner than you think—some smart showman or chief of the "Creative Department" of an advertising agency will capitalize on this magnificent pipe-dream conjured up by Albert Robida. The tower is the editorial central of THE EPOCH—a "telephonographique" newspaper. Our modern translation would be radio-TV journal. THE EPOCH neither prints nor publishes—it visualizes news events and advertising on giant TV screens placed high where they can be seen by people on the ground. Now that we have given the TV advertising boys an idea, we trust they will remember screen credit.

TELEVISION GOES TO WAR

In the 1880's this TV pickup of a North African battle-scene made Frenchmen wonder whether Albert Robida was insane. But in many predictions of things to come Science Fiction Writer-Artist Robida outsmarted his skeptical contemporaries. For the past ten years the French themselves have been embroiled in the North African brush wars. Arab mounts—horses and camels—still are used by the rebel forces. However, the large-size home TV screen is something that has not materialized . . . but TV screens with life-size figures are commonly used in closed-circuit theater TV.

would eventually doom the simple pastoral life. The hidden wealth of the world, the shifting boundaries of nations and the ambitions of dictators would inspire endless wars and disputes.

Robida dreaded this future, with its power politics, blitzkriegs and mass destruction. He was quite sure it would put an end to the age of chivalrous legends, poetry and art for art's sake. The Scientific Age, as he envisioned it, promised dubious pleasures and precarious living.

There are several points of similarity between Robida and Leonardo da Vinci. Both were artists. Both were catholic in their tastes and prophetic in their thinking. Indubitably da Vinci was the greater scientist. His notebooks are filled with mechanical devices and anatomical sketches. Robida's notebooks are filled with old castles, chivalrous legends and classical beauty. When he resorted to prophecy, he frequently reduced his art to caricature, and satire, for which he had a natural bent.

In science fiction the writer and artist have left us a legacy of outstanding creative brilliance which is neither pure science nor pure fiction. Today we accept it as pure entertainment. But much of what Robida turned out was considered pure nonsense in his own day and age. He caricatured the twentieth century with vitriolic humor and gave graphic glimpses of it which appeared as "impossible" to his contemporaries as the twenty-first century which science fiction writers are describing today.

"Science," said Robida, "is like a flood, spreading evenly over the globe and placing everyone on the same plane, so to speak. The remote peoples were unable to compete before but now they have the same engines and explosives."

The great prophet died in 1926. We are still looking for the proverbial peace on Earth; and now we are looking for it in the air as well.

In the Next Issue *Another Great Article*

HUGO GERNSBACK: THE FATHER OF SCIENCE FICTION by SAM MOSKOWITZ

The Fear of Space

Man's fear of the unknown has always been two-pronged. He knows that danger may lurk in regions unexplored. But he dreads more the darkness at the bottom of the stairs.

by ELLERY LANIER

I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED about the sensation of gripping fear which we would experience if we descended a stairway in the dark and found no landing for our feet. The frightening internal shrinking which would take hold of us would be filled with a primitive terror of the unknown.

But to experience an equivalent sensation in reading fiction or in listening to music can be absolutely delightful. This, I suspect, may be the secret behind the pleasure we derive from science fiction, or the chill we get from eerie paintings like the early de Chirico's, where in imagination we look out on a silent and deserted universe that leads into infinity.

This terror of empty space, 'Agoraphobia' has an utterly helpless feeling about it, as well as a sense of hidden power. It is intimately tied to its opposite 'Claustrophobia', the fear of being shut up in a confined space. If the fear is not conquered, it can become overpowering and totally crippling. With mankind confronting a future in space we will have to come to grips with both of these conversion hysteria complications—confinement in the box-like space cabin of a rocket ship and complete isolation in the endless vacuum of space.

A particular kind of courage will be needed and it should not be forgotten that an even greater challenge may await us—the possibility of passing *beyond* normal space. The frontiers of science fiction are yielding to the reality of space travel, but the possibility of passing through our space to other dimensions still remains totally unexplored. I have not been able to find a single scientist with a serious proposal for a Space Warp Drive, like the ones so

frequently used in science fiction. No one seems to have the courage to face up to this challenge. But why should a classic area of science fiction be treated like a tabooed territory?

Are scientists frightened by the missing step at the bottom of the stairs- Are they so badly alarmed that they are hiding behind shallow excuses and evasions?

The real conquest of space will not have been completed when we've reached and explored the planets. We must ultimately try to break the space barrier itself. If we could go from one planet to another by getting into a machine, pressing the contact switch, and arriving on Mars—or across the light years to the stars—in a matter of minutes, science fiction will have pointed the way to the greatest victory of all.

A clue to the mystery of why our space scientists have carefully avoided this challenge may perhaps be found in a talk given by Dr. V. Hlavaty to the Institute of Aeronautical Sciences. His conclusion is gloomy: "Hence, according to this theory, we are living in a space whose structure we can never grasp or understand."

But even if Dr. Hlavaty is right about our inability ever to understand completely the space we live in, we should not reject the possibility of a Space Warp Drive out of hand. We have been extremely successful with many problems which we do not fully understand including the intricacies of atomic structure.

Dr. Hlavaty used the analogy that was once made popular in a book called "Flatland." The people in Flatland were all flat, and lived in a world that was two-dimensional. They could not travel in any direction that had a blocking line in front of it. They were compelled to go all around the obstruction on the flat surface. But such limitations would only exist in an *imaginary* flat world. Until the coming of the airplane most human movement was virtually in terms of a two-dimensional world. We in our three-dimensional world could easily lift the flat man from his flat world and 'transfer' him over the thin line to where he wanted to go. The flat man, of course, would never know what had happened to him. He would probably look upon the occurrence as a supernatural one.

In the same way anyone viewing us from a four-dimensional world could readily comprehend how *easily* we could travel from place to place if the obstruction of the in-between 'space' could be removed. But we cannot even begin to imagine what the shape of that four-dimensional world would be like.

It has been argued that we can imaginatively comprehend the structure of our space by using our intuition which suggests, if it does not actually tell us, that the world we live in is a kind of three-dimensional plane which is flat, rather than a three-dimensional surface which is curved. But according to Dr. Hlavaty we cannot rely on our intuition. It has deceived mathematicians too often in the past. Another approach to the problem is based on our ordinary everyday experience, which tells us that space is flat, or, at the very least, that *things* have *surfaces*. This claim is also disposed of by Dr. Hlavaty, who reminds us that a firm conviction that the earth was flat misled our ancestors—until Columbus.

Actually, two fairly reliable techniques exist for attacking the problem of what our space is really like. One is geometry—the other Einsteinian Relativity. The geometry we were taught in school goes back two thousand years to Euclid. It is based on our intuition and common sense, and works out very well in our everyday experience.

There are any things we simply take for granted in ordinary life, such as our every day belief that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. This seems too obvious to need proving. But Euclid's ideas really can't be proved or disproved. One of his ideas about space, for instance, is actually only an abstraction based on mathematical assumptions. It is his Fifth Axiom. (Axiom's are ideas which we can't prove but take for granted anyway). It says in part that two lines that are parellel to each other meet at infinity.

After Euclid, many mathematicians tried to confirm this experimentally. They were convinced that if they could only prove it, instead of taking it for granted, we could start to know something about what happens to our space when it comes to an end—assuming that space *can* come to an end. It wasn't until about 130 years ago that Lobachevski and Bolyai achieved something really important in this direction. In trying to find out why nobody was able to prove Euclid's Fifth Axiom before, they figured that it probably couldn't be proved at all. If such was the case, then it should be possible to prove—that reality had an unknown dimension.

To accomplish this they used all of Euclid's axioms except the fifth, which they replaced by another which flatly contradicted it. The new idea outraged intuition—and common sense as well. It affirmed that through any point outside a line two lines can be drawn. The new geometry was called non-Euclidian and Lobachevski went so far as to derive a set of useful formulas from it.

Lobachevski came to the conclusion that if his geometry really described our space the existing curvature would be too small to be detected in our daily lives. He tried to check his theory by attempting to measure the curvature of our space. He used a giant measuring triangle stretching across to the stars. The figure three-pointedly joined the Earth, the Sun, and the star Sirius. The results were uncertain. They seemed to confirm his hypothesis but there was no way of determining the accuracy of the instruments or allowing for a reasonable margin of error. The effort turned out to be a failure.

But Lobachevski's failure opened new and unexpected fields for scientific research. It was found that the set of rules we use are determined by our own choice and completely independent of the space in which we happen to live. It was found that it is possible to imagine all kinds of space, and that we don't really know the geometry of our space in a non-Euclidean sense and can only enlarge our knowledge by experimentation.

One way to study the space we live in is by

means of relativity, which gives a geometrical description of the world which involves gravity. According to this viewpoint our world has four dimensions, but it is impossible for us to detect its curvature.

According to the general theory of relativity we live in a four-dimensional curved "space-time." But it is physically impossible for us to visualize what this unorthodox space is really like. All we can ever know is the three dimensional cross-section of the four-dimensional space-time that comprises ultimate reality.

Hlavaty uses the example of a mathematician born blind who can give a complete description of colors from the mathematical point of view. He can even tell you what to do with colors, how to handle them, how to measure them. But he himself will never know the real importance of what he is doing.

If someone tried to explain to him that fire was red and snow was white he would incorrectly think of red as heat and white as cold and upon checking his formulas he would find the most glaring contradictions.

But a good mathematician will take his mathematics seriously in spite of the contradictions, and come to realize that he can never truly comprehend the true meaning of his theory, even though he has mastered it abstractly.

"All that remains to him is the faith that there is some more powerful intelligence than his which understands not only his abstract theory, but also its *true* interpretation." Hlavaty thinks by the same token it is impossible for the human brain satisfactorily to solve the mystery of the structure of the universe in the light of ultimate reality.

But is Hlavaty right? Are we really doomed to never be able to 'know' the four dimensional curved space-time in which we are embedded? Spengler believed that all previous civilizations, as well as our own, have developed a taboo that has served to shield them from really coming to grips with the problem.

Instead of facing it without subterfuge they project a symbolization of their own devising and find escape from the problem in a profound mysticism. Their escape has produced the Gothic Cathedrals, the Moorish Mosques, the paintings of Rembrandt, the dark tone-worlds of Beethoven's quartets; the solids of Euclid's geometry, the miraculously beautiful proportions of the Parthenon and the pyramids, the Nirvana of Buddha, and the visions of all the world's great mystics. We find it operating forcefully through the whole realm of modern technology, right into the workings of the cyclotrons, betatrons, cosmotrons.

But it has only been in the realm of science-fiction that the idea of really moving through this multi-dimensional world was approached as a reality, and not as an escape from reality. And now the question remains as to whether the scientists of our civilization will really accept the challenge and start to build a practical Space Warp Drive. But until this happens—or doesn't happen—it remains for the imagination of science-fiction writers to plot the adventurous possibilities of the greatest adventure of all—the final conquest of our fear of the step at the bottom of the stairs.

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DEPARTMENT of LOST STORIES

The story we're reprinting this month is so evocative in a wholly magical way that we firmly believe it stands alone and apart—that it is, in brief, an A. Merritt masterpiece which surpasses, in its unearthly beauty and strangeness, all of the author's better-known novelettes. We think you'll agree that it is a story to treasure and to return to whenever the moon shines bright. It is considered one of the finest ever to have been published in famed WEIRD TALES. . . . THE EDITORS

THE WOMAN of the WOOD

by A. MERRITT

MCKAY SAT ON THE balcony of the little inn that squatted like a brown gnome among the pines that clothed the eastern shore of the lake. It was a small and lonely lake high up on the Vosges; and yet the word "lonely" is not just the one to tag its spirit; rather was it aloof, withdrawn. The mountains came down on every side, making a vast tree-lined bowl that seemed filled, when McKay first saw it, with a still wine of peace.

McKay had worn the wings with honor in the World War. And as a bird loves the trees, so did McKay love them. They were to him not merely

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trunks and roots, branches and leaves; they were personalities. He was acutely aware of character differences even among the same species—that pine was jolly and benevolent; that one austere, monkish; there stood a swaggering bravo and there a sage wrapped in green meditation; that birch was a wanton—the one beside her virginal, still adream.

The war had sapped McKay, nerve, brain and soul. Through all the years that had passed the wound had kept open. But now, as he slid his car down the side of the great green bowl, he felt its peace reach out to him, caress and quiet him, promise him healing. He seemed to drift like a falling leaf through the cathedraled woods; to be cradled by the hands of the trees.

McKay had stopped at the little gnome of an inn, and there he had lingered, day after day, week after week.

The trees had nursed him; soft whisperings of the leaves, slow chant of the needle pins, had first deadened, then driven from him the re-echoing clamor of the war and its sorrow. The open wound of his spirit had closed under their healing, had closed and become scars; and then even the scars had been covered and buried, as the scars on Earth's breast are covered and buried beneath the falling leaves of autumn. The trees had laid healing hands upon his eyes. He had sucked strength from the green breasts of the hills.

As that strength flowed back to him, McKay grew aware that the place was—troubled; that there was ferment of fear within it.

It was as though the trees had waited until he himself had become whole before they made their own unrest known to him. But now they were trying to tell him something; there was a shrillness as of apprehension, of anger, in the whispering of the leaves, the needled chanting of the pines.

And it was this that had kept McKay at the inn—a definite consciousness of appeal. He strained his ears to catch words in the rustling branches, words that trembled on the brink of his human understanding. Never did they cross that brink.

Gradually he had focused himself, so he believed, to the point of the valley's unease. On all of the shores of the lake there were but two dwellings. One was the inn, and around the inn the trees clustered protectively, confidingly, friendly. It was as though they had not only accepted it, but had made it part of themselves.

Not so was it of the other habitation. Once it had been the hunting-lodge of long-dead lords; now it was half ruined, forlorn. It lay across the lake almost exactly opposite the inn and back upon the slope a half-mile from the shore. Once there had been fat fields around it and a fair orchard.

The forest had marched down upon fields and lodge. Here and there scattered pines and poplars stood like soldiers guarding some outpost; scouting parties of saplings lurked among the gaunt, broken fruit trees. But the forest had not had its way unchecked; ragged stumps showed where those who dwelt in the old house had cut down the invaders; blackened patches showed where they had fired the woods.

Here was the center of the conflict. Here the green folk of the forest were both menaced and menacing, at war.

The lodge was a fortress beleaguered by the trees, a fortress whose garrison sallied forth with ax and torch to take their toll of their besiegers.

Yet McKay sensed a slow, inexorable pressing on of the forest; he saw it as an army ever filling the gaps in its enclosing ranks, shooting its seeds into the cleared places, sending its roots out to sap them; and armed always with a crushing patience. He had the impression of constant watchfulness, as though night and day the forest kept myriads of eyes upon the lodge, inexorably, not to be swerved from its purpose. He had spoken of this impression to the innkeeper and his wife, and they had looked at him, oddly.

"Old Polleau does not love the trees, no," the old man had said. "No, nor do his two sons. They do not love the trees—and very certainly the trees do not love them."

Between the lodge and the shore, marching down to the verge of the lake was a singularly beautiful little coppice of silver birches and firs. This coppice stretched for perhaps a quarter of a mile; it was not more than a hundred feet or two in depth, and not alone the beauty of its trees but also their curious grouping vividly aroused McKay's interest.

Of all the trees in that place McKay loved best this little wood. He had rowed across and rested in its shade, had dreamed there and, dreaming, had heard mysterious whisperings and the sound of dancing feet light as falling leaves; had taken dream-draft of that gayety which was the soul of the little wood.

Two days ago he had seen Polleau and his two sons. McKay had lain dreaming in the coppice all that afternoon. As dusk began to fall he had reluctantly arisen and begun to row back to the inn. When he had been a few hundred feet from shore three men had come out from the trees and had stood watching him—three grim powerful men taller than the average French peasant.

He had called a friendly greeting to them, but they had not answered it; had stood there, scowling. Then as he bent again to his oars, one of the sons had raised a hatchet and driven it savagely into the trunk of a slim birch.

McKay thought he heard a thin, wailing cry from the stricken tree, a sigh from all the little wood. He had felt as though the keen edge had bitten into his own flesh.

"Stop that!" he had cried. "Stop it, damn you!"

For answer Polleau's son had struck again—and never had McKay seen hate etched so deep as on his face as he struck.

The birch was tottering, was falling. Close beside it grew one of the firs, and as the smaller tree crashed over, it dropped upon this fir like a fainting maid into the arms of her lover. And as it lay and trembled there, one of the branches of the other tree slipped from under it, whipped out and smote the hatchet-wielder a crushing blow upon the head, sending him to earth.

It has been, of course, only the chance blow of a

bough, bent by pressure of the fallen trunk and then released as that had slipped down. Of course—yet there had been such suggestion of conscious action in the branch's recoil, so much of bitter anger in it, so much, in truth, had it been like a purposeful blow that McKay felt an eery prickling of his scalp; his heart had missed its beat.

For a moment Polleau and the standing son had stared at the sturdy fir with the silvery birch lying upon its green breast; folded in and shielded by its needled boughs as though—again the swift impression came to McKay—as though it were a wounded maid stretched in the arms of knightly lover. For a long moment father and son had stared.

Then, still wordless but with that same bitter hatred in both their faces, they had stooped and picked up the other and, with his arms around the neck of each, had borne him limply away.

MACKAY, SITTING ON THE balcony of the inn that morning, went over and over that scene, realized more and more clearly the human aspect of fallen birch and clasping fir, and the conscious deliberateness of the latter's blow. During the two days that had elapsed since then, he had felt unease of the trees increase, their whispering appeal become more urgent.

What were they trying to tell him? What did they want him to do?

Troubled, he stared across the lake, trying to pierce the mists that hung over it and hid the opposite shore. And suddenly it seemed that he heard the coppice calling him, felt it pull the point of his attention toward it irresistibly, as the lodestone swings and holds the compass needle.

The coppice called him; it bade him come.

McKay obeyed the command; he arose and walked down to the boat landing, he stepped into his skiff and began to row across the lake. As his oars touched the water his trouble fell from him. In its place flowed peace and a curious exaltation.

The mists were thick upon the lake. There was no breath of wind, yet the mists billowed and drifted, shook and curtained under the touch of unfelt airy hands.

Nowhere was there sound. He let his oars drop and leaned forward, drifting. In the silence, before him and around him, he felt opening the gateways of an unknown world.

And suddenly he heard the sound of voices, many voices, faint at first and murmurous. Louder they became, swiftly; women's voices sweet and lilting, and mingled with them the deeper tones of men; voices that lifted and fell in a wild, gay chanting.

He drifted on, scarce daring to breathe lest even that faint sound break the elfin song. His boat grounded, and as its keel rustled along over the smooth pebbles of the beach the song ceased.

McKay half arose and peered before him. The mists were thicker here, but he could see the outlines of the coppice. It was like looking at it through many curtains of fine gauze, and its trees seemed shifting, ethereal, unreal. And moving along the trees were figures that threaded among the boles and flitted round them in rhythmic

measures, like the shadows of leafy boughs swaying to some cadenced wind.

He stepped ashore. The mists dropped behind him, shutting off all sight of the lake; and as they dropped, McKay lost all sense of strangeness, all feeling of having entered some unfamiliar world. Rather was it as though he had returned to one he had once known well and that had been long lost to him.

The rhythmic flitting had ceased, there was now no movement as there was no sound among the trees—yet he felt the little wood full of watchful life. McKay tried to speak, there was a spell of silence on his mouth.

"You called me. I have come to listen to you—to help you if I can."

A pillar of mist whirled forward and halted, eddying half an arm-length away. Suddenly out of it peered a woman's face, eyes level with his own.

Beautiful was that face, but its beauty was an alien one, unearthly. For long moments the strange eyes thrust their gaze deep into his. Then out of the mist were thrust two slender white arms, the hands long, the fingers tapering.

The tapering fingers touched his ears.

"He shall hear," whispered the red lips.

Immediately from all about him a cry arose, in it were the whispering and rustling of the leaves beneath the breath of the winds; the shrilling of the harpstrings of the boughs; the laughter of hidden brooks, the shoutings of waters flinging themselves down into deep and rocky pools—the voices of the forest made articulate.

"He shall hear!" they cried.

The long white fingers rested on his lips, and their touch was cool as bark of birch on cheek after some long upward climb through forest, cool and subtly sweet.

"He shall speak," whispered the scarlet lips of the wood woman.

"He shall speak!" answered the wood voices again, as though in litany.

"He shall see," whispered the woman, and the cold fingers touched his eyes.

"He shall see!" echoed the wood voices.

The mists that had hidden the coppice from McKay wavered, thinned and were gone. In their place was a limped, translucent, palely green *aether*, faintly luminous—as though he stood within some clear wan emerald. His feet pressed a golden moss spangled with tiny starry bluets. Fully revealed before him was the woman of the strange eyes and the face of unearthly beauty. He dwelt for a moment upon the slender shoulders, the willow litheness of her body. From neck to knees a smock covered her, sheer and silken and delicate as spun cobwebs; through it her body gleamed as though fire of the young spring moon ran in her veins.

He looked beyond her. There upon the golden moss were other women like her, many of them.

Within that pellucid, greenly luminous *aether* McKay was abruptly aware that the trees of the coppice still had a place. Only now they were spectral indeed. They were like white shadows cast athwart a glaucous screen; trunk and bough, twig and leaf they arose around him and they were as though etched in air by phantom craftsmen—thin and unsubstantial; they were ghost trees rooted in another space.

He was aware that there were men among the women; men whose eyes were set wide apart as were theirs, as strange and pupilless as were theirs, but with irises of brown and blue; men with pointed chins and oval faces, broad-shouldered and clad in kirtles of darkest green; swarthy-skinned men, muscular and strong, with that same lithe grace of the women—and like them of a beauty that was alien and elfin.

McKay heard a little wailing cry. He turned. Close beside him lay a girl clasped in the arms of one of the swarthy, green-clad men. She lay upon his chest. His eyes were filled with a black flame of wrath, and hers were misted, anguished. For an instant McKay had a glimpse of the birch that old Polleau's son had sent crashing down into the boughs of the fir. He saw birch and fir as immaterial outlines around this man and this girl. For an instant girl and man and birch and fir seemed to be one and the same.

The scarlet-lipped woman touched his shoulder. "She withers," sighed the woman, and in her voice McKay heard a faint rustling as of mournful leaves. "Now is it not pitiful that she withers—our sister who was so young, so slender and so lovely?"

McKay looked again at the girl. The white skin seemed shrunken; the moon radiance that gleamed through the bodies of the others was still in hers, but dim and pallid; her slim arms hung listlessly; her body drooped.

"May the arm that stuck her down wither!" said the green-clad man who held her, and in his voice McKay heard a savage strumming as of winter winds through bleak boughs.

"I thirst," whispered the girl.

There was a stirring among the watching women. One came forward holding a chalice that was like thin leaves turned to green crystal. She paused beside the trunk of one of the spectral trees, reached up and drew down to her a branch. A slim girl with half-frightened, half-resentful eyes glided to her side and threw her arms around the ghostly bole.

The woman cut the branch deep with what seemed an arrow-shaped flake of jade and held her chalice under it. From the cut a faintly opalescent liquid dripped into the cup. When it was filled, the woman beside McKay stepped forward and pressed her own long hands around the bleeding branch. She stepped away and McKay saw that the stream had ceased to flow. She touched the trembling girl and unclasped her arms.

"It is healed," said the woman gently. "And it was your turn, little sister. The wound is healed. Soon you will have forgotten."

The woman with the chalice knelt and set it to the wan, dry lips of her who was—withering. She drank of it, thirstily, to the last drop. The misty eyes cleared, they sparkled; the lips that had been so parched and pale grew red, the white body gleamed as though the waning light within it had been fed with new.

"Sing, sisters," the girl cried, shrilly. "Dance for me, sisters!"

McKay listened as the strange, wild dancing was resumed. He watched, lost in wonder, his own world more than half forgotten.

The woman beside him touched his arm. She pointed to the girl. "Yet she still withers," she said. "And not all our life, if we poured it through her lips, could save her."

He saw that the red was draining slowly from the girl's lips, that the luminous life-tides were waning. The eyes that had been so bright were misting and growing dull once more. Suddenly a great pity and a great rage shook him. He knelt beside her, took her hands in his.

"Take them away! Take away your hands! They burn me!" she moaned.

"He tries to help you," whispered the green-clad man, gently. But he reached over and drew McKay's hands away.

"Not so can you help her or us," said the woman. "What can I do?" McKay arose, looked helplessly from one to the other. "What can I do to help you?"

The chanting died, the dance stopped. A silence fell, and he felt upon him the eyes of all these strange people. They were tense, waiting. The woman took his hands. Their touch was cool and sent a strange sweetness sweeping through his veins.

"There are three men yonder," she said. "They hate us. Soon we shall all be as she is there—withering! They have sworn so will they do. Unless—"

She paused. The moonbeam dancing motes in her eyes changed to tiny sparklings of red that terrified him.

"Three men?" In his clouded mind was dim memory of Polleau and his two strong sons. "Three men?" he repeated, stupidly. "But what are three men to you who are so many? What could three men do against those stalwart gallants of yours?"

"No," she shook her head. "No—there is noth-

ing our—men—can do, nothing that we can do. Once, night and day, we were gay. Now we fear—night and day. They mean to destroy us. Our kin have warned us. And our kin can not help us. Those three are masters of blade and flame. Against blade and flame we are helpless."

"Surely will they destroy us," murmured the woman. "We shall wither—all of us. Like her there, or burn—unless . . ."

Suddenly she threw white arms around McKay's neck. She pressed her body close to him. Her scarlet mouth sought and found his lips and clung to them. Through all McKay's body ran swift, sweet flames, green firs of desire. His own arms went round her, crushed her to him.

"You shall not die!" he cried. "No—by God, you shall not!"

She drew back her head, looked deep into his eyes. "They have sworn to destroy us," she said, "and soon. With blade and flame they will destroy us—those three—unless . . ."

"Unless?" he asked, fiercely.

"Unless you—slay them first!" she answered.

A cold shock ran through McKay, chilling the fires of his desire. He dropped his arm from around the woman, thrust her from him. For an instant she trembled before him.

"Slay!" he heard her whisper—and she was gone.

The spectral trees wavered; their outlines thickened out of immateriality into substance. The green translucenec darkened. He had a swift vertinginous moment as though he swung between two worlds. He closed his eyes. The dizziness passed and he opened them, looked around him.

He stood on the lakeward skirts of the little coppice. There were no shadows flitting, no sign of white woman nor of swarthy, green-clad men.

McKay stood there, staring, wondering, like a man who has but half awakened from dream. And suddenly a little wind stirred the leaves of the rounded birch beside him. The leaves murmured, sighed. The wind grew stronger and the leaves whispered.

"Slay!" he heard them whisper—and again: "Slay! Help us! Slay!"

And the whisper was the voice of the woman of the scarlet lips!

Rage, swift and unreasoning, sprang up in McKay. He began to run up through the coppice, up to where he knew was the old lodge in which dwelt Polleau and his sons. And as he ran the wind blew stronger about him, and louder and louder grew the whispering of the trees.

"Slay!" they whispered. "Slay them! Save us! Slay!"

He came to the edge of the coppice and burst from it out into a flood of sunshine. For a hundred feet he ran, and then he was aware that the whispering command was stilled; that he heard no more that maddening rustling of wrathful leaves. A spell seemed to have been loosed from him; it was as though he had broken through some web of sorcery. McKay stopped, dropped upon the ground, buried his face in the grasses.

He lay there marshaling his thoughts into some order of sanity. What had he been about to do?

To rush upon three men who lived in the old lodge and—slay them! And for what? Because that unearthly, scarlet-lipped woman whose kisses he still could feel upon mouth had bade him! Because the whispering trees of the little wood had maddened him with that same command! For this he had been about to kill three men!

What were that woman and her sisters and the green-clad swarthy gallents of theirs? Illusions of some waking dream—phantoms born of the hypnosis of the swirling mists through which he had rowed and floated across the lake? Such things were not uncommon. McKay knew of those who by watching the shifting clouds could create and dwell for a time with wide-open eyes within some similar land of fantasy; knew others who needed but to stare at smoothly falling water to set themselves within a world of waking dreams; there were those who could summon dreams by gazing into a ball of crystal, others who found dream-life in saucers of shining ink.

Might not the moving mists have laid those same fingers of hypnosis upon his own mind? And his love for the trees, the sense of appeal that he had felt so long, his memory of the wanton slaughter of the slim birch have all combined to paint upon his drugged consciousness the fantasms he had beheld!

McKay arose to his feet, shakily enough. He looked back at the coppice. There was no wind now; the leaves were silent, motionless. Reason with himself as he might, something deep within him stubbornly asserted the reality of his experience. At any rate, he told himself, the little wood was far too beautiful to be despoiled.

The old lodge was about a quarter of a mile away. A path led up to it through the ragged fields. McKay walked up the path, climbed rickety steps and paused, listening. He heard voices and knocked. The door was flung open and old Polleau stood there, peering at him through half-shut, suspicious eyes. One of the sons stood close behind him. They stared at McKay with grim, hostile faces.

"What do you want?" demanded Polleau, curtly. "I am a neighbor of yours, stopping at the inn . . ." began McKay, courteously.

"I know who you are," Polleau interrupted, bruskly, "but what is it that you want?"

"I find the air of this place good for me." McKay stifled a rising anger. "I am thinking of staying for a year or more until my health is fully recovered. I would like to buy some of your land and build me a lodge upon it."

"Yes, *M'sieu?*" There was acid politcness now in the old man's voice. "But is it permitted to ask why you do not remain at the inn? Its fare is excellent and you are well-liked there."

"I have desire to be alonc," rcplicd McKay. "I do not likc people too close to me. I would have my own land, and slcep under my own roof."

"But why come to me?" asked Polleau. "There are many places upon the far side of the lake that you could secure. It is happy there, and this side is not happy, *M'sieu*. But tell me, what part of my land is it that you desire?"

"That little wood yonder," answered McKay, and pointed to the coppice.

"Ah! I thought so!" whispered Polleau, and between him and his son passed a look of somber understanding.

"That wood is not for sale, *M'sieu,*" hc said.

"I can afford to pay well for what I want," said McKay. "Name your price."

"It is not for sale," repeated Polleau, stolidly, "at any price."

"Oh, come," urged McKay, although his heart sank at the finality in that answer. "You have many acres and what is it but a few trees? I can afford to gratify my fancies. I will give you all the worth of your other land for it."

"You have asked what that place that you so desire is, and you have answered that it is but a few trees," said Polleau, slowly, and the tall son behind him laughed, abruptly, maliciously. "But it is more than that, *M'sieu*—oh, much more than that. And you know it, else why should you pay such a price as you offer? Yes, you know it—since you know also that we are ready to destroy it, and you would save it. And who told you all that, *M'sieu?*" he snarled.

There was such malignance, such black hatred in the face thrust suddenly close to McKay's; eycs blazing, teeth bared by uplifted lip, that involuntarily he recoilcd.

"Only a few trees!" snarled old Polleau. "Then who told him what we mean to do—eh, Pierre?"

Again the son laughed. And at that laughter McKay felt within him rcsurgence of his own blind hatred as he had fled through the whispering wood. He mastered himself, turned away; there was nothing he could do—now.

Polleau halted him. "*M'sieu,*" he said, "entcr. There is something I would tell you; something, too, I would show you." He stood aside, bowing with a rough courtesy.

McKay walked through the doorway. Polleau with his son followed him. He entered a largc, dim room whose ceiling was spanned with smoke-blackened beams. From these beams hugc onion strings and herbs and smoke-cured meats. On one side was a wide fireplacc. Huddled bcside it sat Polleau's other son. He glanced up as thcy entered, and McKay saw that a bandage covered onc side of his head, hiding his left eye. McKay recognized him as the one who had cut down the slim birch. The blow of the fir, he reflected with a certain satisfaction, had been no futile one.

Old Polleau strode over to that son. "Look, *M'sieu,*" he said, and lifted the bandage.

McKay saw, with a tremor of horror, a gaping blackened socket, red-rimmed and eyeless.

"Good God, Polleau!" he cried. "But this man needs medical attention. I know somcthing of wounds. Let me go across the lake and bring back my kit? I will attend him."

Old Polleau shook his head, although his grim face for the first time softened. He drew the bandages back in place.

"It heals," he said. "We have some skill in such things. You saw what did it. You watched from your boat as the cursed tree struck him. The eyc was crushed and lay upon his cheek. I cut it away. Now he heals. We do not need your aid, *M'sieu.*"

"Yet he ought not have cut the birch," muttered McKay, more to himself than to be heard.

"Why not?" asked old Polleau, fiercely, "since it hated him."

McKay stared at him. What did this old pcasant know? The words strengthcned his stubburn conviction that what he had seen and heard in the coppice had been actuality—no dream. And still more did Polleau's next words strengthen that conviction.

"M'sieu," he said, "you come here as ambassador —of a sort. The wood has spoken to you. Well, as ambassador I shall speak to you. Four centuries my people have lived in this place. A century we have owned this land. *M'sieu*, in all those ycars there has been no moment that the trees have not hated us—nor we the trecs.

"For all those hundred years there have been hatred and battle between us and the forcst. My father, *M'sieu*, was crushed by a tree, my elder brothcr crippled by another. My father's father, woodsman that he was, was lost in the forest; he came back to us with mind gone, raving of woodwomen who had bewitched and mocked him, lured him into swamp and fen and tanglcd thicket, tormenting him. In every generation the trees have taken their toll of us—womcn as well as men—maiming or killing us."

"Accidents," said McKay. "This is childish, Polleau. You can not blame the trees."

"In your heart you do not believe so," said Polleau. "Listen, the fcud is an ancient one. Centuries ago it began when we were serfs, slaves of the nobles. To cook, to keep us warm in winter, they let us pick up the fagots, the dead branches and twigs that dropped from the trees. But if we cut down a tree to keep us warm, to keep our women and our children warm, yes, if we but tore down a branch —they hanged us, or threw us into dungeons to rot, or whipped us till our backs wcre red lattices.

"They had their broad fields, the noblcs—but we must raise our food in the patches where the trees disdained to grow. And if they did thrust themselves into our poor patches, then, *M'sieu,* we must

let them have their way—or be flogged, or be thrown into the dungeons, or to be hanged.

"They pressed us in—the trees," the old man's voice grew sharp with fanatic hatred. "They stole our fields and they took the food from the mouths of our children; they dropped their fagots to us like dole to beggars: they tempted us to warmth when the cold struck to our bones—and they bore us as fruit aswing at the end of the foresters' ropes if we yielded to their tempting.

"Yes, *M'sieu*—we died of cold that they might live! Our children died of hunger that their young might find root-space! They despised us—the trees! We died that they might live—and we were men!

"Then, *M'sieu*, came the Revolution and the freedom. Ah, *M'sieu*, then we took our toll! Great logs roaring in the winter cold—no more huddling over the alms of fagots. Fields where the trees had been—no more starving of our children that theirs might live. Now the trees were the slaves and we the masters.

"And the trees knew, and they hated us!

"But blow for blow, a hundred of their lives for each life of ours—we have returned their hatred. With ax and torch we have fought them . . .

"The trees!" shrieked Polleau suddenly, eyes blazing, face writhing, and grey hair clutched in rigid hands. "The cursed trees! Armies of the trees creeping ever closer—crushing us in! Stealing our fields as they did of old! Building their dungeon round us as they built of old the dungeons of stone! Creeping—creeping! Legions of trees! The trees! The cursed trees!"

McKay listened, appalled. Here was crimson heart of hate. Madness! But what was at the root of it? Some deep inherited instinct, coming down from forefathers who had hated the forest as the symbol of their masters—forefathers whose tides of hatred had overflowed to the green life on which the nobles had laid their taboo. In such warped minds the crushing fall of a tree, the maiming sweep of a branch, might appear as deliberate; the natural growth of the forest seem the implacable advance of an enemy.

And yet—the blow of the fir as the cut birch fell *had* been deliberate! And there had been those women of the wood . . .

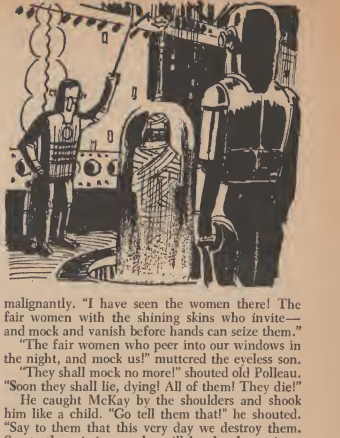
"Patience," the standing son touched the old man's shoulder. "Patience! Soon we strike our blow."

Some of the frenzy died out of Polleau's face.

"Though we cut down a hundred," he whispered, "by the hundred they return! But one of us, when they strike—he does not return, no! They have numbers and they have time. We are now but three, and we have little time. They watch us as we go through the forest, alert to trip, to strike, to crush!

"But, *M'sieu,*" he turned bloodshot eyes to McKay, "we strike our blow, even as Pierre has said. We strike at that coppice that you so desire. We strike there because it is the very heart of the forest. There the secret life of the forest runs at full tide. We know—and you know! Something that, destroyed, will take the heart out of the forest—will make it know us for its masters."

"The women!" The standing son's eyes glittered,



malignantly. "I have seen the women there! The fair women with the shining skins who invite—and mock and vanish before hands can seize them."

"The fair women who peer into our windows in the night, and mock us!" muttered the eyeless son.

"They shall mock no more!" shouted old Polleau. "Soon they shall lie, dying! All of them! They die!"

He caught McKay by the shoulders and shook him like a child. "Go tell them that!" he shouted. "Say to them that this very day we destroy them. Say to them it is we who will laugh when winter comes and we watch their bodies blaze in this hearth of ours and warm us! Go—tell them that!"

He spun McKay around, pushed him to the door, opened it and flung him staggering down the steps. He heard the tall son laugh, the door close. He rushed up the steps and hurled himself against the door—beat at it with clenched fists. The three within paid no heed. Despair began to dull his rage. Could the trees help him—counsel him?

He turned and walked slowly down the field path to the little wood. Slowly and ever more slowly he went as he neared it. He had failed. He was a messenger bearing a warrant of death. The birches were motionless, their leaves hung listlessly.

McKay squared his shoulders and passed in between the trees. It was strangely silent in the coppice. He laid his hands upon the cool bark of the rounded tree. "Let me see again!" he whispered. "Let me hear! Speak to me!"

There was no answer. Again and again he called. The coppice was silent. He wandered through it, whispering, calling.

Suddenly he was aware that one of the trees was trembling; that the whole coppice was trembling; that all the little leaves were shaking, tremulously. Reason told him that it was the wind—yet there was no wind!

And as he stood there, a sighing arose as though a mournful breeze were blowing through the trees—and again there was no wind!

Louder grew the sighing and within it now faint wailings.

"They come! They come! Farewell, sisters! Sisters—farewell!"

Clearly he heard the soft mournful whispers.

McKay began to run through the trees to the trail that led out to the field of the old lodge. And as he ran the wood darkened as though clear shadows gathered in it, as though vast unseen wings hovcred over it. The trembling of the coppice increased; bough touched bough, clung to each other; and louder became the sorrowful crying: "Farewell, sister! Sister—farewell!"

McKay burst out into the open. Halfway between him and the lodge were Polleau and his sons. They saw him; they pointed and lifted mockingly to him their bright axes. He crouched, waiting for them to come close, all fine-spun theories gone, and rising within him that same rage which hours before had sent him out to slay.

So crouching, he heard from the forested hills a roaring clamor. From every quarter it came, wrathful, menacing; like the voices of legions of great trees bellowing through the horns of tempest. The clamor maddencd McKay; fanned the flame of rage to white heat.

If the three men heard it, they gave no sign. They came on steadily, jeering at him, waving their blades. He ran to mect them.

"Go back!" he shouted. "Go back, Polleau! I warn you!"

"He warns us!" jeered Polleau, "He—Pierre, Jean—he warns us!"

The old peasant's arm shot out and his hand caught McKay's shoulder with a grip that pinched to the bone. The arm flexed and hurled him against the unmaimed son. The son caught him, twisted him about and whirled him headlong a dozen yards, crashing through the brush at the skirt of the wood.

McKay sprang to his feet howling like a wolf. The clamor of the forest had grown stronger.

"Kill!" it roared. "Kill!"

The unmaimed son had raised his ax. He brought it down upon the trunk of a birch, half splitting it with one blow. McKay heard a wail go up from the little wood. Before the ax could be withdrawn he had crashed a fist in the ax-wielder's face. The head of Polleau's son rocked back: he yelped, and before McKay could strike again had wrapped strong arms around him, crushing breath from him.

McKay relaxed, went limp, and the son loosened his grip. Instantly McKay slipped out of it and struck again, springing aside to avoid the rib-breaking clasp. Polleau's son was quickcr than he, the long arm caught him. But as the arms tightened there was the sound of sharp splintering and the birch into which the ax had bitten toppled. It struck the ground directly bchind the wrestling men. Its branches seemed to reach out and clutch at the feet of Polleau's son.

He tripped and fell backward, McKay upon him. The shock of the fall broke his grip and again McKay writhed free. Again he was upon his feet, and again Polleau's strong son, quick as he, faced him. Twice McKay's blows found their mark beneath his heart before oncc more the long arms trapped him. But the grip was weaker; McKay felt that now their strength was equal.

Round and round they rocked, McKay straining to break away. They fell, and over they rolled and over, arms and legs locked, each striving to free a hand to grip the other's throat. Around them ran Polleau and the one-eyed son, shouting encouragement to Pierre, yet neither daring to strike at McKay lest the blow miss and be taken by the other.

And all that time McKay heard the little wood shouting. Gone from it now was all mournfulness, all passive resignation. The wood was alive and raging. He saw the trees shake and bend as though torn by a tempest. Dimly he realized that the others could hear none of this, scc none of it, and dimly wondered why this should be.

"Kill!" shoutcd the coppice—and ever over its tumult he was aware of the roar of the great forest. "Kill! Kill!"

He saw two shadowy shapes—shadowy shapes of swarthy green-clad men, that pressed close to him as he rolled and fought.

"Kill!" they whispered. "Let his blood flow! Kill!"

He tore a wrist free. Instantly he felt within his hand the hilt of a knife.

"Kill!" roared the forest.

McKay's arm swept up and plunged the knife into the throat of Polleau's son! He heard a choking sob; heard Polleau shriek; felt the hot blood spurt in face and over hand; smelt its salt and faintly acrid odor. The encircling arms dropped from him; he reeled to his feet.

As though the blood had been a bridge, the shadowy men leaped into materiality. One threw himself upon the man McKay had stabbed; the other hurled upon old Polleau. The maimed son turned and fled, howling with terror. A white woman sprang out from the shadow, threw herself at his feet, clutched them and brought him down. Another woman and another dropped upon him. The note of his shrieking changed from fear to agony, then died abruptly into silence.

And now McKay could see none of the trees, neither old Polleau nor his sons, for green-clad men and white woman covered them!

He stood stupidly, staring at his red hands. The roar of the forcst had changed to a decp triumphal chanting. And all around him wove and danced the slim, gleaming women of the wood.

They ringed him, their song bird-sweet and shrill, jubilant. Beyond them he saw gliding toward him the woman of the misty pillar whose kisses had poured the sweet grecn fire into his veins. Her arms were outstretched to him, her strange wide eyes were rapt on his, her white body gleamed with the moon radiance, her red lips werc parted and smiling, a scarlet chalice filled with the promise of undreamed ccstasies. The dancing circle, chanting, broke to let her through.

Abruptly, a horror filled McKay—not of this woman, not of her jubilant sister, but of himself.

He had killed! And the wound the war had left in his soul—the wound he thought had healed, had opened.

He rushed through the broken circle, thrust the shining woman aside with his blood-stained hands and ran, wceping, toward the lake shore. The singing ceased. He heard little cries, tender, appealing little cries of pity, soft voices calling on him to stop, to return. Behind him was the sound of little racing

feet, light as the fall of leaves upon the moss.

McKay ran on. The coppice lightened, the beach was before him. He heard the fair woman call him, felt the touch of her hand upon his shoulder. He did not heed her. He ran across the narrow strip of beach, thrust his boat out into the water and wading through the shallows threw himself into it.

He lay there for a moment, sobbing, then drew himself up and caught at the oars. He looked back at the shore now a score of feet away. At the edge of the coppice stood the woman, staring at him with pitying, wise eyes. Behind her clustered the white faces of her sisters, the swarthy faces of the green-clad men.

"Come back!" the woman whispered, and held out to him slender arms.

He paid no heed. She threw out her arms in a gesture of passionate farewell. Then a mist dropped like a swift curtain between him and her and all the folk of the little wood.

McKay rowed on, desperately. After a while he shipped oars, and leaning over the boat's side he washed away the red on his hands and arms. His coat was torn and bloodstained; his shirt too. The latter he took off, wrapped it around the stone that was the boat's rude anchor and dropped it into the depths. His coat he dipped into the water, rubbing at the accusing marks. When he had lightened them all he could, he took up his oars.

His panic had gone from him. Upon its ebb came a rising tide of regret; clear before his eyes arose the version of the shining woman, beckoning him, calling him . . . he swung the boat around to return. And instantly as he did so the mists between him and the father shore thickened; around him they lightened as though they had withdrawn to make of themselves a barrier to him, and something deep within him whispered that it was too late.

He saw that he was close to the landing of the little inn. There was no one about, and no one saw him as he fastened the skiff and slipped to his room. He locked the door, started to undress. Sudden sleep swept over him like a wave, drew him helplessly down into ocean depths of sleep.

A KNOCKING AT HIS door awakened McKay, and the innkeeper's voice summoning him to dinner. Sleepily he answered, and as the old man's footsteps died away he roused himself. His eyes fell upon his coat, dry now, and the ill-erased blood-stains splotching it. Puzzled, he stared at them for a moment; then full memory clicked back into place.

McKay hid the stained coat in his traveling-trunk, bathed and put on a fresh outfit and sauntered down to dinner. He ate excellently. Wonder now and then crossed his mind that he felt no regret, no sorrow even for the man he had killed. He was half inclined to believe it had all been only a dream—so little of any emotion did he feel. He had even ceased to think of what discovery might mean.

His mind was quiet; he heard the forest chanting to him that there was nothing he need fear; and when he sat for a time that night upon the balcony a peace that was half an ecstasy stole in upon him from the murmuring woods and enfolded him.

Cradled by it he slept dreamlessly, unaware of the swaying boughs.

McKay did not go far from the inn that day. The little wood danced gayly and beckoned him, but he paid no heed. Something whispered to wait, to keep the lake between him and it until word came of what lay or had lain there. And the peace still was on him.

Only the old innkeeper seemed to grow uneasy as the hours went by. He went often to the landing, scanning the farther shore.

"It is strange," he said at last to McKay as the sun was dipping behind the summits. "Polleau was to see me here today. If he could not come he would have sent one of his sons."

McKay nodded, carelessly.

"There is another thing I do not understand," went on the old man. "I have seen no smoke from the lodge all day. It is as though they were not there."

"Where could they be?" asked McKay indifferently.

"I do not know," the voice was more perturbed. "It all troubles me, *M'sieu*. Polleau is hard, yes; but he is my neighbor. Perhaps an accident . . ."

"They would let you know soon enough if there was anything wrong," McKay said.

"Perhaps, but . . ." the old man hesitated. "If he does not come tomorrow and again I see no smoke, I will go to him."

McKay felt a little shock run through him; tomorrow, then, he would know, definitely, what it was that had happened in the little wood.

"I would if I were you," he said. "I'd not wait too long, either."

"Will you go with me, *M'sieu*?" asked the old man.

"No!" whispered the warning voice within McKay. "No! Do not go!"

"Sorry," he said, aloud. "But I've some writing to do. If you should need me, send back your man; I'll come."

And all that night he slept, again dreamlessly, while the crooning forest cradled him.

The morning passed without sign from the opposite shore. An hour after noon he watched the old innkeeper and his man row across the lake. And suddenly McKay's composure was shaken, his serene certainty wavered. He unstrapped his field-glasses and kept them on the pair until they had beached the boat and entered the coppice.

Slowly the seconds ticked by. And it was all of an hour indeed before he saw them come out upon the shore and drag their boat into the water. McKay, throat curiously dry, deafening pulse within his ears, steadied himself, forced himself to stroll leisurely down to the landing.

"Everything all right?" he called as they were near. They did not answer, but as the skiff warped against the landing they looked up at him, and on their faces were stamped horror and a great wonder.

"They are dead, *M'sieu*," whispered the innkeeper. "Polleau and his two sons—all dead!"

McKay's heart gave a great leap, a swift faintness took him. "Dead!" he cried. "What killed them?"

"What but the trees, *M'sieu?*" answered the old man, and McKay thought that his gaze dwelt upon him strangely. "The trees killed them. See—we went up the little path through the wood, and close to its end we found it blocked by fallen trees. The flies buzzed round those trees, *M'sieu*, so we searched there. They were under them, Polleau and his sons. A fir had fallen upon Polleau and had crushed in his chest. Another son we found beneath a fir and upturned birches. They had broken his back, and an eye had been torn out—but that was no new wound, the latter."

He paused. "It must have been a sudden wind," said his man; "yet I never knew of a wind such as that must have been. There were no trees down except those that lay upon them. And of those it was as though they had leaped out of the ground! Yes, as though they had leaped out of the ground upon them. Or it was as though giants had torn them out for clubs. They were not broken—their roots were bare . . ."

"But the other son—Polleau had two?" Try as he might, McKay could not keep the tremor out of his voice.

"Pierre," said the old man, and again McKay felt that strange quality in his gaze. "He lay beneath a fir. His throat was torn out!"

"His throat torn out!" whispered McKay. His knife! His knife! The knife that had been slipped into his hand by the shadowy shapes!

"His throat was torn out," repeated the innkeeper. "And in it still was the broken branch that had done it. A broken branch, *M'sieu*, pointed like a knife. It must have caught Pierre as the fir fell, and ripping through his throat, been broken off as the tree crashed."

McKay stood, mind whirling in wild conjecture. "You said—a broken branch?" he asked through lips gone white.

"A broken branch, M'sieu." The innkeeper's eyes searched him. "It was very plain—what it was that happened. Jacques," he turned to his man, "go up to the house."

He watched until the man shuffled out of sight. "Yet not all is so plain, *M'sieu*," he spoke low to McKay, "since in Pierre's hand I found—this."

He reached into a pocket and drew out a button from which hung a strip of cloth. They had once been part of that stained coat which McKay had hidden in his trunk. And as McKay strove to speak, the old man raised his hand. Button and cloth dropped from it, into the water. A wave took it and floated it away; another and another snatched it and passed it on. They watched it, silently, until it had vanished.

"Tell me nothing," said the keeper of the inn. "Polleau was a hard man, and hard men were his sons. The trees hated them. The trees killed them. The—souvenir—is gone. Only *M'sieu* would better also—go."

That night McKay packed. When dawn had broken he stood at his window, looking long at the little wood. It too was awakening, stirring sleepily—like drowsy, delicate demoiselles. He thought he could see that one slim birch that was—what? Tree or woman? Or both?

Silently, the old landlord and his wife watched him as he swung out his car—a touch of awe, a half-fear in their eyes. Without a word they let him go.

And as McKay swept up the road that led over the lip of the green bowl, he seemed to hear from all the forest a deep-toned, mournful chanting. It arose around him as he topped the rise in one vast whispering cloud—of farewell—and died.

Never, he knew, would that green door of enchantment be opened to him again. His fear had closed it—for ever. Something had been offered to him beyond mortal experience—something that might have raised him to the level of the gods of Earth's youth. He had rejected it. And nevermore, he knew, would he cease to regret.

SATELLITE—*Presents*—Next Month

Another Classic From WEIRD TALES

The Thing in the Cellar

A Short, Shuddery Story

By DAVID H. KELLER, M.D.

Nearly all of Stanley Weinbaum's stories have been republished in hard covers and are widely available. But here's one which is virtually unknown. The author wrote it when he was quite young and it appeared many years ago in the now yellowing pages of an early fan publication, FANTASY MAGAZINE. *Both in its own right and as a supplement to the Moskowitz article it is, we think, of exceptional reader interest.*

Graph

by STANLEY G. WEINBAUM

STANLEY G. WEINBAUM

Medicine, on the frontiers of the unknown, is very likely to be a surprise to the patient.

DR. FELIX KURTIUS tossed his black ease carelessly on the desk. "You're on the mend again," he said. "Let's see how permanent it is this time!"

Isaac Levinson—mail-order Levinson—rolled down his sleeve and stared sardonically at the doctor. "Thanks," he growled. "I've heard that before."

"You're feeling better, aren't you?"

The merchandise king nodded reluctantly, staring about his elaborate office. "Sure," he said. "But for how long? And anyway, why don't you do something? Is this the new medical practice—to let a patient get well by himself? For that I don't need a doctor!"

"I gave you my suggestions," retorted Kurtius. "Three and a half years ago—when you first called me—I told you what to do. Don't blame me because you refuse to follow my advice."

"Vacations!" sneered Levinson. "Rest—change

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—travel—rctire! Could I leave my business with conditions like they were?"

"You certainly could! What's a little more money to you—or a little less?"

"Money—bah! It's my business that needs me."

"Same thing."

"No," said Levinson abruptly. "Not the same thing. My stockholders, my employees, I have obligations to them. The business must be run right, or the one loses money and the other jobs. Could I let some fool make a botch of things while I was telling how the biggest tarpon got away from me."

"Just excuses," observed Kurtius. "What you mean is that you didn't want to leave."

"Couldn't is what I said."

"Wouldn't is what you mean." The doctor gestured at the fittings of his patient's office. "You don't mean to tell me you're so busy that you haven't time to walk two blocks to my office, do you? Instead of having me call here to examine you?"

Levinson silently indicated the welter of papers on his desk.

"And that's what you're wedded to!" scoffed Kurtius. "Charts, summarics, statistics. Any clerk could tabulate them for you."

"Charts and statistics are the life-blood of my business," growled Levinson.

"And your business is the life-blood of you!"

"Yet you want I should get away from it."

"That's my advice. No man can live year after year on his own blood. You can't; that's the whole trouble with you. That's why medicine or operations are perfectly useless in your case."

"Bah!" Levinson was frowning again. "I have a notion that you doctors recommend the rest cure when you don't know what's wrong. I don't want to rest. I want something that will put me in shape to keep on working. I don't believe it's my business that's doing this to me; for twenty-five years I've lived, eaten, slept, and dreamt this business, and never, until that first time I called you, have I felt an hour's sickness. And now these damned spells—better, worse, better, worse! How could it be my business?"

"Well," observed Kurtius, "there's no way of proving it to you. I've told you my diagnosis; that's all I can do. You'll find out sooner or later that I'm right."

"I don't believe it," said Levinson stubbornly.

"Well, as I've said, there's no way of proving it to you."

"You doctors," said Levinson, "spend your efforts treating symptoms instead of causes. Because I am tired, I must go somewhere and rest; because I can't sleep, I must get out somewhere and exercise; because I have no appetite, I must go away from my business! Why don't you find out why I am tired, and can't sleep or eat? I should run my business like that and in a year I'd be broke."

"Didn't you ever hear of functional disorders?" queried Kurtius mildly.

"Am I the doctor or you?"

"Functional disorders are those where there's nothing the matter with the patient—that is organically. Nothing wrong except in the mind or nervous system."

"Hah! Imaginary sickness I've got."

"It's not imaginary. Functional troubles are just as real as organic ones, and sometimes a damn sight harder to treat. Especially if the patient won't cooperate."

"And you think my business is doing that?"

"Just as I told you."

"Bah! For more than twenty years I have had no trouble. And why do I get better and then worse again? You should make a study of your cases."

"Do you think I don't?" snapped Kurtius. "I can give you this case history by heart. Why, look here? Here's something you ought to be able to understand!" He reached toward his black bag, noting that the catch had opened, spilling a stethoscope and a paper or two on the littered desk. He seized a paper and spread it out before his patient.

"What's that?" grunted Levinson.

"Graph of your metabolism," said the doctor. "Make a study of my cases, eh! Here's your chart month by month for three and a half years."

Levinson scanned the irregular black line. Suddenly he narrowed his eyes, leaned closcr. A moment more and he burst into a snickering laugh.

"What's the matter?" asked Kurtius impatiently.

"The chart!" chuckled Levinson. "Hee-hee! It's a graph of our sales I was looking at before you came! Case-record, huh?"

Kurtius glanced at the paper, frowned perplexedly, and suddenly gave vent to a shout of laughter.

"Hot!" He roared, slapping the desk. "Funny! Oh, Lord!"

"What's that funny?" asked his patient.

"The graph! The sales-chart!" bellowed the doctor. "Your business doesn't affect you, eh? Look!"

He pulled anothcr bit of paper from his bag, spread it besides the first. "Here's your metabolism! Look it over!"

Peak for peak, valley for valley, the two graphs were identical!

Coming Soon—Fascinating Science Fiction Novelets by

FRANK HERBERT **RANDALL GARRETT**

A most gratifying mail-bag response greeted SATELLITE's first appearance on the news-stands. It has continued across the months, and now that we've gone large, flat-size it has turned into an avalanche of letters which spell out, in general, one insistent request: "We, the readers, would very much favor a forum devoted exclusively to reader opinion." So . . . here it is . . . your page, your *space*, where editorial blue-penciling will not intrude, and the widest possible divergence of opinion will be welcomed from every corner of the galaxy. Letter-writing, we believe, has a very special appeal for SF enthusiasts.

Timeliness and Diversity in an Open Forum of Letters from Readers

EDMOND HAMILTON

Dear Leo: I just got hold of the new SATELLITE and in the big format it is a honey. The title is a terrific asset these days, and hope it goes over a million. Especially interested in the "Department of Lost Stories." Maybe sometime I can suggest a couple of stories for it (not by Hamilton), as I think I know the old files of Weird Tales well.—*R.D.2, Kinsman, Ohio.*

VIC RYAN

Dear Editor: At last Satellite hits its stride! March issue is *very* good. Keep up issues like this and you'll never have a problem. My main objection—the cover. In my estimation, it's very poor. Balance wasn't good, and the idea of different colored space ships doesn't seem at all good.

Christopher's "World of Slaves" was excellent. I hope at some time he'll expand this into a book-length novel. Idea very good, characters vivid, and development superb. "The Nancy Routine" and Moskowitz's article were only fair. "At Your Own Risk" had an extremely good general idea, but lacked the intangible quality that would have made it into a classic. Both stories in the Department of Lost Stories were excellent. *Please* keep this section up! "To Live Forever" was about average.

All in all, the best issue of Satellite I've ever seen! Keep up such quality.—*2160 Sylvan Road, Springfield, Ill.*

BASIL WELLS

Dear Cylvia Kleinman: You, your husband, and Long can be proud of the format of your Feb. issue. Bought it two-three weeks back but didn't pat you on back. Only suggestion I would have would be a *brief* book review column, listing available new volumes and possibly reprints. Digest size didn't pull the sf mags out of the hole; yet the men's mags, in large format, are booming. Hope you can keep the large size. Regards.—*Springboro, Pa.*

BILLY EDEN

Dear Mrs. Kleinman: Keep featuring a novel every single month, because that is why I buy Satellite. I would like to suggest that on the monthly novel you describe the main character, and have each chapter titled. I am still up on cloud #9 screaming for a letter department. Sincerely. —*Box 92, Rt. #1, Lanham, Md.*

ALEXANDER BRAUN R.

Gentlemen: May I say that your new publication "Satellite" is one of the best S-F mags that I have seen in a very long time. My suggestion would be that in a few months, binders be issued.—*300 Pelham Road, New Rochelle, N.Y.*

PAUL SPENCER

Dear Editor: Congratulations on the large format and monthly publication! Best of luck on both of them.

I've been a reader of science fiction for an embarrassing number of years, and have always felt that the 8½x11 format (which was used on the very early s-f magazines in the 20's and 30's) was the most suitable. Its generous proportions are appropriate to the vast scope of science fiction, and lend a certain dignity that well befits this most intellectual branch of pulp fiction. It also makes possible more spectacular illustrations, and I hope you'll take advantage of that (and avoid hunched-up little ones like that for "From Little Acorns").

In this connection, I'd like to see the L-shaped band removed from the cover, so that the cover painting can really spread itself—yes, even though that means more lettering over the picture. The present layout provides little more scope than the digest-size covers.

Anyway, I feel the new size adds class, and I hope it will be retained permanently. As for monthly publication —fine, if you can get enough good stories to fill the magazine each month.

Regarding artwork, I like Morey—preferably in the soft-pencil style he employed some years back. And how about more from Emsh? R. Paul? (Imagine the effect his "Ultimate Space Station" would have had if spread over the full expanse of a large-size magazine!)

The new feature, Department of Lost Stories, is a fine idea, provided that the stories are (a) good; (b) not readily found elsewhere; (c) not all from *Weird Tales* (which published lots of fine supernatural fantasy, but very little *good* science fiction).

In the February issue, I liked best "The Forsaken Earthman" and "From Little Acorns." The novel, "Second Chance," is not one of your best novels, but is entertaining. The Asimov story is slight, but OK.

Worst in the issue was "The Chicken-Hearted Ghost." This is not a good story; but what bothers me more is that it is a supernatural fantasy, *not* science fiction. Please, no more fantasy in SATELLITE, which proclaims itself an SF magazine! If you want to publish supernatural stories, revive WEIRD TALES. (In fact, I'm all in favor of it!)

Sam Moskowitz's articles are always informative and entertaining. By all means continue the series. Once again: good luck with your admirable experiment.—*37 Nagle Avenue, New York, N. Y.*

LEONARD BROWN

Dear Sir: I was very pleased to see the February issue of SATELLITE. I have never thought that the digests were the best thing for sf magazines. I *congratulate you for doing something that no other science-fiction publisher has had the nerve or brains to do.* I sincerely hope that you will meet with greater success than the Alfred Hitchcock magazine met with, when it switched to the large size. I think that in a short time, other sf mags will follow suit, and leave the digest shells.

As far as the contents went, SECOND CHANCE was a fine novel. No other story came close to it in quality. I thought that the SAM MOSKOWITZ feature was very interesting. I'll be looking forward to future articles by him. But, you certainly do need a letter column. Please try to do something about it. Try devoting 2 or 3 pages to letters in each issue. It brings about a strong loyalty among

your readers. An editorial is also necessary. Please continue them.

Inside illustrations were disappointing. The one of page #4 could have been excellent, if done by a better artist. Try to get WOOD or FINLAY. Something should be done about the art work. The cover was good.

Department of Lost Stories is a very good idea. But the stories are too short. Instead of using 2 short ones, why not 1 long one? Keep in the "Coming Next Month" feature.

Again, lots of luck in this new format. I hope it can be said some day that SATELLITE SF brought a change to the entire sf publishing world. A fine magazine you've got there. I'll be watching for it every month.—*4701 Snyder Ave., Brooklyn 3, N. Y.*

MRS. W. EDWIN DAVIS

Dear Sir: I read the two stories from Department of Lost Stories first. Better they should have stayed lost! I felt positively dirty after reading them. I am now on John Christopher's "World of Slaves." Yes, I read his "No Blade of Grass" in the Sat. Evening Post. You have a good magazine. I like the size. Right back like they were in 1929. Lots of luck to you.—*Seven Springs, No. Car.*

CLARK PETERSEN

Dear Editor: Usually when a magazine grows bigger, or doubles its size, it goes from a bi-monthly to a monthly. You added an extra and made it double-size, something which few magazines do. Congratulations! A crowning touch, and I think many readers of this magazine would agree, would be to have a "letter-to-the-editor" column. One extra page of this magazine will probably handle the situation.—*Main St., Box 138, Yerington, Nevada.*

GARY BARBER

Dear Mr. Margulies: Your magazine recently caught my eye as I was browsing in a neighborhood store. I don't usually buy science fiction magazines because I prefer the paperback novels, but it's impossible for me to resist good science fiction. I enjoyed the stories very much and especially the "Department of Lost Stories."

You can be pleased with Satellite and I'm sure it will sell very well, especially today, when fiction is turning into fact very quickly.

I also have an idea you or someone might be interested in. Lately I have been thinking how nice it would be to have a book with pictures of the leading science fiction authors, and a short history of each one. I have a collection of 92 books, both paperback and hardcover ones, but have no idea what most of the authors look like. I think most fans would be very interested in a book or publication of this sort.—*787 Payne Ave., No. Tonawanda, N. Y.*

ZENNY HYBKE

Dear Leo and the Boys: Congratulations on the new Satellite—excellent magazine. From now on I'll never miss one issue. The newsdealers around here in La Salle gave your mag top billing—they put it right out in front—where it belongs. I'd like to have you know that the younger generation read your mag also. I'm 14 years old. Keep 'em coming!—*318 Marquette St., LaSalle, Ill.*

WILLIAM BROOKS

Dear Sir: Congratulations! Your new size for Satellite is a great innovation. It stands out over all other magazines of its kind and isn't hid in the back like the others are. I think your cover painting would be more impressive covering the entire cover and also the contents should be expanded to 100 pages at least even if a price boosts ensues.—*Yale Univ., 327 Temple St., New Haven, Conn.*

JOHN N. MARX, JR.

Dear Mr. Margulies: I'm writing to express my comments on your new publishing venture, the new giant SATELLITE. First of all let me wish you the best of luck and success. And especially congratulations on going monthly. You have been my favorite science fiction magazine every since your third issue.

With the state science fiction is in now, with magazines folding right and left, including those that had just gone monthly, the field is getting mighty slim. That is all the more reason I hope you are successful.

Now my comments about this new large size. I think I can see your reasons for it. More and different people will notice it in its new shelving. Also, just a chance to monthly with your old format probably wouldn't have proved successful. But I state here and now that I personally do not like the new size as well as the digest one. My reasons are several. First of all I don't think it looks as nice. For example, on this February issue, you have a beautiful painting by Schomberg (keep him producing), but this giant yellow band around it that takes up the remainder of the space tends to, in my eyes, cheapen the appearance, and detract from the painting. Also the size forces one to read the magazine sitting up, and I'm fond of reading in bed. Also I would think there is more chance for the magazine to get mutilated and torn in shipment and afterwards. And of course it doesn't fit in with the rest of my collection of s-f.

However, these things, at worst, are minor distractions. The main and important part of any magazine is the story content, and there you certainly haven't fallen down any. "Second Chance" by J. F. Bone was an excellent story, one of the six best you've published, as good as any anywhere, and a story that would make a terrific movie. All the shorter stories were enjoyable, with the exception of the very minor "The Chicken-Hearted Ghost" by Dal Stivens, whose plot was stolen from the comic book "Casper the Ghost," or something like that. The idea of the classic comics is good. I hadn't read either of the stories you printed. But I did think they were rather minor. Of course I realize they are forerunners to many other stories written in similar veins. Then, too, it is hard for an author to achieve a lasting story in so few words. But they were both enjoyable.

Of the other stories, Chad Oliver's was a very outstanding and well written story. He is a really good author that doesn't write enough. Yes, I've said it before, and I'll say it again. Thanks for putting out such a good magazine. And I'm sure I'll like the new size better when I've become more used to it. I would subscribe if there were any opportunity to save money. I would anyway if I would be sure that my copy wouldn't get damaged in the mails. *Waterbury, Nebraska.*

LESLIE H. HOUSEL

Dear Mr. Margulies: Thanks for taking another step in improving the category of science fiction . . . especially your new mag size.

Someday perhaps an editor and publisher will make a stf mag that one can take into any group or anywhere without that slight feeling of self-consciousness. Being a mechanical engineer and liking stf, perhaps some of the following suggestions would remove a few of the stf castigations and dime-novel allusions and I will be one whole new group of readers. (by the way, what *does* stf stand for?):

(a) Add an editorial: at least a page and a half. From time to time have guest editors . . . generals . . . power plant consultants . . . physicists and lab leaders like G.E. Research lab. To the thousands of engineers across the country . . . tool designers . . . draftsman, project leaders and salesmen, and lots of businessmen: Luncheon often drifts into trivia . . . weather, tv, sports. What a fine piece of conversation the latest editorial would be. The source is Satellite of course . . . most desirable?

(b) Your feature article "Arthur Conan Doyle" was one of the finest for good plain reading and adding to ones general *culture*. Two such articles per issue would surely attract a big following.

(c) Put the illustration on the inside of the front cover. Add another semi-technical article. Put the contents on the front cover with emphasis on science . . . You already have an audience for the fiction.

When one could have the fiction we get from Satellite, plus culture articles, plus an item that you wouldn't have to search Physics, Nucleonics, Science News Letter for, it would be ideal.—*190 Vista Drive, Jackson, Michigan.*

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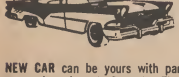

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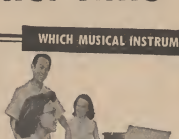

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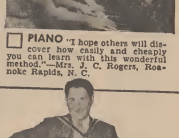

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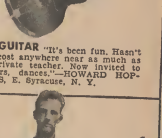

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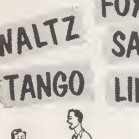

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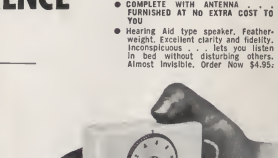

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